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MATTHEW ARNOLD

POET AND CRITIC

INAUGURAL-DISSENTATION

DER PHILOSOPHISCHEN

FAKULTÄT DER UNIVERSITÄT
BERN

ZUR ERLANGUNG DER DOKTORWÜRDE

VORGELEGT VON

ARNOLD SCHRAG

geb. Wyligen (Bern).

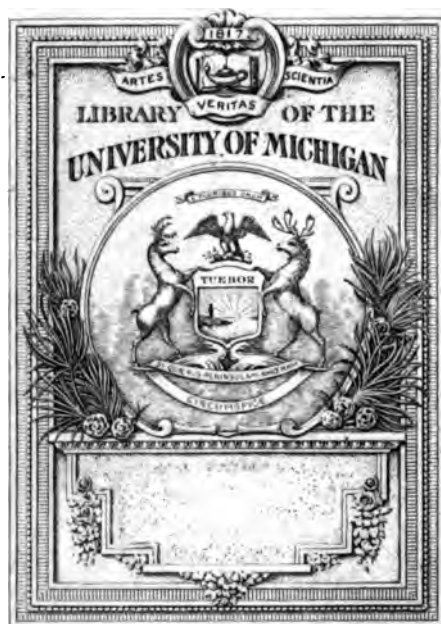
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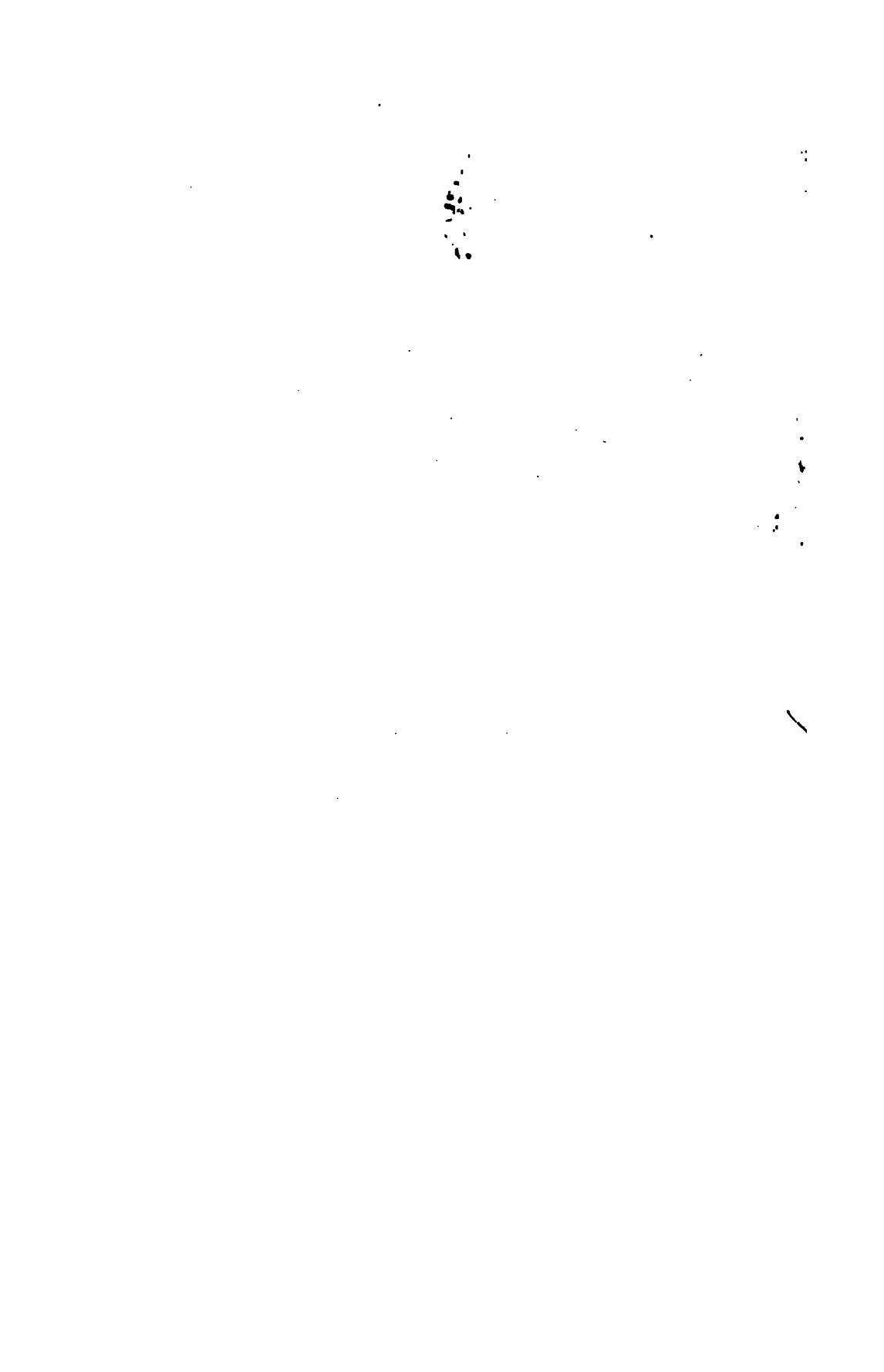
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Basel 1904

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CONTENTS

I. Introductory Chapter.

- | | Page |
|---|------|
| 1. <i>Indirect influences on Matthew Arnold.</i> Evolution of thought in England during the first four decades of the nineteenth century: The Oxford Movement. — Dr. Thomas Arnold opposed to it. — Some of his most prominent qualities that Matthew Arnold inherited from his father: — Dr. Arnold a Liberal in matters religious and political. — <i>Principles of Church Reform.</i> — Dr. Arnold's teachers: Coleridge, Carlyle, Wordsworth. — Dr. Arnold on the verge of doubt. | |
| 2. <i>Direct influences on Matthew Arnold.</i> His early youth. — M. Arnold at Rugby: Liberal spirit of the school. — Intro-spective habits. — Short biographical notice up to 1851 | 1—16 |

II. The Poet.

Early poetry: accepts the ancient models, especially for the drama. Later poems: Poetry a criticism of life, — *The age of pessimism.* — Science had nourished too sanguine hopes. — Religious doubts. — Political hopes frustrated. — Matthew Arnold the poet of pessimism.

M. Arnold fond of Nature. — A nineteenth century Gray. — His mania for form. — Want of rhythm. — His poetry without passion. — The elegiac poems are his best. — A few optimistic notes

16—39

III. Matthew Arnold, critic of social life and manners, and religious teacher.

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Ceased to write poetry. — Pessimism overthrown. — Works for the propagation of <i>Culture</i> : the social classes criticised. — The School Inspector. | |
| <i>Criticism.</i> The new terms not over-felicitous. — At that time, his preaching was necessary. Examples of Philistinism. — Too hard on the Aristocracy. — Always called for too radical changes. — Showed little historic sense. — Not proficient in matters concerning the method of teaching. — But good survey | 40 56 |

IV

	Page
2. Strict Science and Religion: Prof. Huxley. — Fundamentally, Arnold agrees with him. — In what he differs from the Great Agnostic: Morality touched with emotion. — The Bible a book of poetry. — A very precious one. — New definition of God: The Eternal Not-ourselves that makes for righteousness. — Proved by the teaching of the Prophets — of Jesus — of St. Paul.	
<i>Criticism.</i> Too individual, want of a general scientific basis. — Too severe on dogmas. — Here again, want of historic sense. — Absence of logic. — Objections raised by Martineau. — Arnold's and Martineau's views compared with those of Prof. Seeley.	
<i>Summing up:</i> — Ethical idealism	56—69

IV. The Literary Critic.

The French critics his models. — The new method: milieu, individual. — *Biography*. — Literary criticism in England before Matthew Arnold. — Dr. Johnson. — Carlyle did not take the final step. — Proof. — *The Reviews*; too personal and too abstract. — After 1840, low standard of literary criticism.

Matthew Arnold. — Knew little German. — *Esprit français*. — New definition of criticism. — Impartial. — *Biography*, but with a wise moderation. — Influence of the race. — Renan. — Urbanity, but not weakness.

Essays in Criticism. — Not always scientific. — Subjects not exhausted. — Judgments correct. — A first-rate stylist. — His theory of the grand style rejected. Little practices.

Conclusion. An idealist 69—88

Bibliography	89—94
-------------------------------	-------

In the closing pages of his *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* M. Taine calls our attention to a great change actually at work in England, a revolution entering, not by sudden inundation, but by slow infiltration. He is thinking of the growing influence of those ideas which have been collected under the much abused term: the *Spirit of the Age*. If by Spirit of the Age we understand the fresh current of ideas brought about by that marvellous development of scientific method and research in all the domains of knowledge during the nineteenth century, then surely we must accord a prominent position in the history of English thought to Matthew Arnold. Numerous are the passages in the works of this modern writer in which allusion is made to the *Zeitgeist*. Whatever verdict may be given on Matthew Arnold's application of modern thought to new rules of social and religious life, it remains certain that he sincerely endeavoured to grasp the leading ideas of his time and that he undertook the by no means enviable part of an apostle of these very ideas.

In order to arrive at an impartial and in some measure decisive criticism of Matthew Arnold's work, we must first trace out the evolution of the spirit of the age and thus try to discover the sources of original currents in Arnold's teaching. In so far as these currents also reflect the author's individuality, they can only be explained by our applying the laws of heredity and utilising biography.

Thomas Arnold, the father of Matthew Arnold, was born on June 13th 1795, at West Cowes, in the Isle of Wight. As a child he was early imbued with a love of Nature. The stirring events of the French Revolution probably left a lasting impression on his mind. His father was collector of customs. In 1807 Thomas was sent to Winchester, where he remained till 1811. In this year he was elected as a scholar at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. In 1815 he was elected Fellow of Oriel and was thus admitted into a circle of men whose names will for ever be

memorable in the history of English thought: — Hampden, Hawkins, Keble, Whately, Pusey and Newman. For the next four years he remained at Oxford taking private pupils and reading hard.

In 1818 Thomas Arnold was ordained deacon at Oxford, and two years later he married Mary Penrose, a clergyman's daughter. His family-life was an inexhaustible source of happiness to him. In 1819 he settled at Laleham near Staines, a charming place lying on the banks of the Thames. Here he spent nine years, taking seven or eight private pupils in preparation for the Universities. During this period he acquired an astonishing psychological insight and all those ideas on education the realisation of which was to place him in the first rank of English educationists of all times.

In 1827 a new field of operation was opened up to Dr. Arnold. In that year the headmastership of Rugby fell vacant, Dr. Wooll having resigned. At a late hour, Dr. Arnold resolved to offer himself as a candidate. — "If Mr. Arnold is elected, he will change the face of education all through the Public Schools of England" — thus Dr. Hawkins, then Provost of Oriel, wrote to the trustees. Arnold was elected and assumed his duties as a head-master of Rugby in August 1828.

There is no need to say much about all the benefits offered by the University to a man whose name was placed in the first class in *Litteræ Humaniores*. But we must try to find our way through the leading ideas of that time which indirectly helped to shape the mind of our Oxford scholar and which on various occasions drew him into the middle of the fight.

The religious questions concern us first of all. For the present, however, it is useless to trace out the new theology as it was developed by the great poets and thinkers during the first decades of the nineteenth century. These ideas influenced Dr. Arnold, but he did not directly help to develop them. After 1830, however, new questions concerning Church and Religion were raised in which he took a keen and active interest.

In the eighteenth century, a great part of the English clergy took their obligations easy. The average clergyman was a slave of routine and a servant of the world. But about 1830, a change for the better was impending.

Of the highest importance for the revival of religious life as well as for Biblical criticism was the *Oxford Movement* which was partly owing to the individuality of its leaders, but promoted and accelerated by important political events.

The Orthodox party at Oxford were highly displeased at the success of Sir Robert Peel who, in 1829, had carried the Bill of Catholic Emancipation, the purpose of which was to calm the growing discontent in Ireland. The Revolution in France brought the Whigs into power. After a violent struggle with the Lords and Prelates they carried a new bill for electing Parliament. — It soon became obvious that the main action of the new government was directed against the Church; for in 1833 there followed the Irish Reform Bill by which the revenues of the Anglican Church in Ireland were considerably reduced and half the bishoprics abolished. The people had not been indifferent to the course of events, and in many places excesses against the bishops had been committed. The High Churchmen began to feel the actual danger and determined on calling forth a reaction. Keble's sermon on *National Apostacy* was the battle-cry. It was the beginning of the *Oxford Movement* which was brought about by a body of remarkable men all connected with the University of Oxford. After the publication of the first forty-six *Tracts for the Times* (1834) the members of the party were nicknamed *Tractarians*. The most remarkable of these reformers were Henry Newman, the soul of the Movement, and Dr. Pusey, the official leader of it.

"Let us give up a National Church and have a real one", this was the key of their teaching. The Movement had two sides, one theological, one practical. It inquired into the real character, constitution and shortcomings of the Church. It also insisted on the necessity of self-discipline.

Newman, like Froude, always recognised the greatness of the Roman Church. For this reason, as well as for their attacks on the Anglican Church, the Tractarian party found itself isolated, even persecuted. Against Dr. Pusey and Ward, the Board of Heads of Houses acted like fanatics.

In 1844 Ward's *Ideal of a Christian Church* had marked the long expected step: the work assumes that only the Roman Church satisfies the conditions of what a Church ought to be.

In October 1845 it became known that Newman had entered the Roman Catholic Church. Some of his disciples followed his example. Dr. Pusey, Keble and others accepted a painful separation from Newman.

The efforts of the Tractarians were not altogether lost. Gradually the beneficent influence of the Movement made itself felt in the Anglican party. After 1840 Anglicanism began to change its habitual course. It strongly desired to remedy its faults. Church and Religion were again treated as serious matters, and thus the Tractarians also indirectly gave a new impulse to Biblical exegesis.

The Oxford Movement leads us back to Dr. Thomas Arnold, head-master of Rugby. In the same year that Newman started the Movement, Thomas Arnold published the *Principles of Church Reform*. This pamphlet called forth a storm of indignation; but it has become the basis for all the progressive developments in the English Church.

Dr. Arnold stood under the direct influence of Whately who had been his master and mentor at Oxford and had become Archbishop of Dublin. Whately was no theologian, but held the opinion that many of the dogmas of the Church had no real foundation in the Scriptures, that the Bible contained a system of practical truths, motives and principles in a popular form. Dr. Arnold had also been an intimate friend of Keble's.¹⁾ For a long time he laboured to avert the suspension of their intimate intercourse. But the separation of the two friends was inevitable, for Dr. Arnold was an adversary of the Movement. It is true, he was convinced that the opinions he combated existed in men who were thoroughly in earnest.²⁾ He felt himself called upon to insist on the fanaticism of the Church of England — "a dress, a ritual, a name, a ceremony, a technical phraseology, — the superstition of a priesthood without its power . . . leading to no good, intellectual, moral, or spiritual".³⁾

But to the Newmanites, — war!

¹⁾ Cf. the interesting letter of Mr. Justice Coleridge, Stanley p. 7 et seq.

²⁾ Letter to the Rev. J. Hearn, Jan. 1833.

³⁾ The Oxford Malignants, Ed. Rev. April 1836.

"I cannot say how I am annoyed by these extravagances; for what is to become of the Church if the clergy begin to exhibit an aggravation of the worst superstitions of the Roman Catholics?" ¹⁾

We have already become acquainted with the prominent features of Dr. Arnold's character: a great sense of justice, a powerful liberal feeling, unrelenting courage, the power of swimming against the current, and finally, an exceedingly practical turn of mind. We must further insist on these characteristics in order to prove that they were by no means accidental.

He pitied the Irish and even intended to do what he could for this people. In reference to the Roman Catholic Relief Act he wrote a pamphlet in which he wanted to show that national injustice is a sin. ²⁾ The Revolution of July in France seemed to him "a most blessed revolution, spotless beyond all example in history". ³⁾ And in November 1830 his mind was still busy with the same subject. He wrote to the Rev. Dr. Hawkins:

"But I do admire the Revolution in France — admire it as heartily and entirely as any event recorded in history; and I think that it becomes every individual, still more every clergyman, and most of all every clergyman in a public situation, to express this opinion publicly and decidedly."

Dr. Arnold was more liberal-minded than perhaps any other man in England at that time, comparatively liberal-minded in religious matters, decidedly so in his ideas concerning the State.

Previously to his taking orders he doubted the authority of the Articles. He took Keble's advice "to pause in his inquiries, to pray earnestly for help and light from above". ⁴⁾ But liberal he remained for all that. Instead of devoting so much time and energy to Bible Society and missions, it might be more fruitful to reform the institutions of England. ⁵⁾ — The Gospel is attractive to all those who love truth and

¹⁾ Letter to Mr. Serjeant Coleridge, Oct. 1833.

²⁾ Letter, March 1829.

³⁾ To Rev. G. Cornish, Aug. 1830.

⁴⁾ Letter from Mr. Justice Coleridge.

⁵⁾ To Rev. J. Tucker, 1826.

goodness. If there are men who seek truth and goodness otherwise than through the medium of the Gospel, he thinks that they are not far from the Kingdom of God.¹⁾ A Catholic is a member of Christ's Church just as much as he himself is.²⁾ — He could not see any plausible reason for Ordination being refused to men who wish in earnest to be ministers of the Church holding its truth and sympathising in its spirit though they cannot believe in every word of the Articles and the Liturgy.³⁾

Dr. Arnold was not the man to do destructive work only. He who undauntedly accused his own Church of serious shortcomings but rejected the doctrine of Newman, also felt that Newmanism ought to be met with something positive, with a real living Church.⁴⁾ On various occasions he let his friends and the public know the ideal he was aiming at.

"The *Idea* of my life, to which I think every thought of my mind more or less tends, is the perfecting the *idea* of the Edward the Sixth Reformers, — the constructing a truly national and Christian Church, and a truly national and Christian system of education.⁵⁾

His liberalism on one side, his wish for Church Reform on the other, will enable us to understand his famous pamphlet, *Principles of Church Reform*.

Some principles he believed to be irrefragable; "that a Church Establishment is essential to the well-being of the nation; that the existence of Dissent impairs the usefulness of an establishment always, and now, from peculiar circumstances, threatens its destruction, . . . that to extinguish Dissent by persecution being both wicked and impossible, there remains the true, but hitherto untried way, to extinguish it by comprehension".⁶⁾

The Church must open her gates to the Dissenters and receive all who are Christians and who wish to be Christians. —

1) To Rev. J. C. Blackstone, March 1828.

2) To Whately, Nov. 1833.

3) To A. P. Stanley, Esq., Dec. 1839.

4) To the Rev. F. C. Blackstone, Feb. 1839.

5) To Mr. Justice Coleridge, Nov. 1835.

6) Preface.

"We all believe that the volume of the Old and New Testament contains the revelation of God's will to man" (p. 29). — "Extravagance in one extreme provokes equal extravagance in the other". — It is necessary that the Church government should be made more efficient. This could be attained: *First*, by reducing the size of the dioceses. *Second*, by giving the Bishop a council consisting of lay members and clerical, for, "as long as the clergy have the whole administration of the Church in their own hands, their power over other men must be neutralized". *Third*, by the institution of diocesan general assemblies. *Fourth*, by admitting laymen to preach who are of serious character and willing to preach and who do preach as things are at present, but with the evil, that they preach by their own authority, and are unavoidably led to feel themselves in opposition to the Establishment (p. 51).

"The parish church should be the only place of worship. It would not be a great evil, but a great good, if different services were performed at different times of the day and week, within the walls of the same Church" (p. 67).

This proposed union of a Christian ideal and broad-minded humanity was a thing unheard of in England, and all the parties attacked the book. The High Churchmen thought these ideas heretical; to the Liberals they appeared bigoted.

It is of great moment to note that in 1846 the German theologian August Neander hailed in Thomas Arnold an advocate and promoter of the free theology.

"Wir freuen uns, hier auch in England einen Geistesverwandten deutscher wissenschaftlicher Richtung nachweisen zu können. . . . Und wir halten dies für ein wichtiges Zeichen der Zeit: es ist das Wehen eines Geistes, der über Deutschland hinausgeht, einen allgemeineren Umschwung hervorbringen wird." ¹⁾

We cannot, in our days, accept this statement concerning Dr. Arnold to the whole of its extent, though there lies much truth in it. First of all, Dr. Arnold was well acquainted with the writings of Coleridge, Wordsworth and Carlyle. What did these great thinkers teach him?

¹⁾ Die Bedeutung des Thomas Arnold.

After the Age of Reason — the eighteenth century — had passed, there followed a natural counter-current in the Age of Feeling. Rousseau was the powerful originator of the new spirit. The German poets of Storm and Stress were his direct descendants, and, moreover, the precursors of the German Romantic School. In England, these new ideas found powerful interpreters in Wordsworth and Shelley. This current was favourable to a revival of religious feeling. It produced men like Schleiermacher, Neander and Schlegel. Kant gave a sound philosophical basis to the new Idealism.

A similar revival of religious feeling was brought about in England, first of all by S. T. Coleridge, a typical representative of Romanticism and a zealous disciple of the German philosophers. In 1825 he published *Aids to Reflection*. In this work he endeavoured to trace back the reality of faith to the moral and spiritual nature of man. He tried to show the relation between Philosophy and Religion.

"By undeceiving, enlarging, and informing the intellect, Philosophy sought to purify and to elevate the moral character. Christianity reversed the order. Her first step was to cleanse the heart by means accessible to all. But the benefit did not stop here. In preventing the rank vapours that stream up from the corrupt heart, Christianity restores the intellect likewise to its natural clearness." ¹⁾

But Philosophy has always influenced Religion.

"It is not less true that all the epochforming revolutions of the Christian world, the revolutions of religion, and with them the civil, social and domestic habits of the nations concerned, have coincided with the rise and fall of metaphysical systems." ²⁾

"Yet among a numerous and increasing class of the higher and middle ranks, there is an inward withdrawing from the life and personal being of God, a returning of the thoughts to the so-called physical attributes." ³⁾

¹⁾ Aids I, p. 146.

²⁾ Statesm. Man. p. 215. Cf. Similar passages Aids I, 124, 5 et seq., 132, 4 et seq., 142.

³⁾ Aids I, 333, 4 et seq.

"Evidences of Christianity! I am weary of the word. Make a man feel the want of it; rouse him, if you can, to the self-knowledge of his need of it; and you may safely trust it to its own evidence.¹⁾

From these passages it may be seen that Coleridge wished to save the inmost soul, the intrinsic value of Religion; nevertheless he brought to the study of the Scriptures a spirit hitherto unknown in England.

"There is one art, of which every man should be master, the art of reflection. If you are not a thinking man, to what purpose are you a man at all?"²⁾

The *Confessions of an inquiring Spirit* (1840) were directed against the belief in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. The divine spirit has revealed itself in other works besides the Bible.

Carlyle, the great seer, worked in the same direction. He, too, insisted on the necessity of Religion.

"If our era is the Era of Unbelief, why murmur under it; is there not a better coming, nay come?"³⁾

We are to believe the truth, and nothing but the truth, and we are to reject whatever cannot be proved to be true.

"First must the dead Letter of Religion own itself dead, and drop piecemeal into dust, if the Living Spirit of Religion, freed from this its charnel-house, is to arise in us, newborn of Heaven, and with new healing under its wings."⁴⁾

But God can be found; seek him in the right place, — in the sanctuary of thy soul! Like Gœthe, Carlyle held that the divine idea was at the bottom of all phenomena.

"The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel house with spectres; but godlike, and my Father's."⁵⁾

Dogmas are necessary symbols to clothe the divine ideas; but these symbols are not absolute; they are changeable as time advances.⁶⁾

¹⁾ Ibid. cf. also: I, 187.

²⁾ Aids I, Preface.

³⁾ Sartor Resartus, Book II, 3.

⁴⁾ Ibid.

⁵⁾ Sartor II, 9.

⁶⁾ Sartor III, 3.

Side by side with Coleridge and Carlyle we have to place William Wordsworth. He has written many a feeble and wearisome line; but in his greatest utterances we hear the voice of a prophet. He does not, however, aim at the destruction of the old faith; he only wishes to abolish narrow creeds.

Wordsworth buried himself in the solitude of Rydal Mount and spent years in contemplating Nature, not as a scientist, but as a poet. True, his experience of man and the world could not be nourished by this manner of living; and yet it was the only way for him to form the new creed. — There is a God; behold his face in outward Nature; there too behold man's face! In Nature the mind of God and the mind of man meet together. Therefore, the outward appearance of Nature is not all Nature; it is — to use Carlyle's words — the symbol of something that can only be revealed to the inward eye. Intercourse of Nature — never ceasing joy!

He ¹⁾ sang of love, with quiet blending,
Slow to begin, and never ending;
Of serious faith, and inward glee;
That was the song — the song for me.

The Nightingale, 1806.

Coleridge, Carlyle and Wordsworth have one common feature: They are liberal, yet not materialistic. They care little for the old forms, but they care a good deal for the essence of Religion. Each of them possesses an inquiring spirit, but each of them, too, might have chosen for his motto:

We live by admiration.

And all three have been the spiritual teachers of Dr. Thomas Arnold and his son Matthew.

At first sight, Dr. Arnold seems to have accepted the Bible "as an oracle of God, a positive supernatural revelation made to man, an immediate inspiration of the spirit". At Laleham he once said: "Nothing is more striking to me than our *Lord's own* description of the judgment". But from such a passage we may not infer that he took every word of the Bible literally. He had no time for scientific research concerning the Scriptures. But his true historic sense — Dr. Arnold was a great admire-

¹⁾ The Stock-dove.

of Niebuhr and is himself the author of a remarkable History of Rome — led him to understand the Bible much like his three great religious teachers. If, in fact, he did believe in an immediate inspiration of the spirit, he came upon this belief historically. He did not start with any preconceived theory of inspiration.¹⁾

Pfleiderer rightly supposes that Dr. Arnold might in time have turned towards a critical explanation of the Bible records.

Dr. Arnold was an anxiously inquisitive mind. For instance, in order to read Niebuhr he learnt German. — “Every additional language gained, is like an additional power, none more so than German.”²⁾

In politics, as well as in questions concerning Church and Religion, Dr. Arnold was not, in the common sense of the word, a member of any party.

“For, though I think that men, who are lovers of truth, become less and less attached to any mere party as they advance in life, and certainly become in the best sense of the word, more tolerant, yet their views also acquire greater range and consistency.”³⁾

Still there is a kind of liberalism which belongs to no party exclusively, but which is above parties; and such was the political liberalism of Dr. Arnold. He saw too much of the oligarchical spirit in England and accused the political economists of encouraging this spirit by their language about national wealth.⁴⁾

Summing up what we have said about Dr. Arnold's opinions we have to confess that in reading his Correspondence we could not help being struck with a strange contrast which continually forced itself on our mind.

Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust.

Dr. Arnold believed in the bodily Resurrection; he also believed in a personal God, in “the great supernatural man” whom, a few years later, his son helped to dethrone. When

1) Letter from B. Price.

2) To C. Vaughan Esq., Feb. 1835.

3) To Rev. F. C. Blackstone, Feb. 1834.

4) To Rev. G. Cornish, Jul. 1825.

he thought of the Zurich Government putting Strauss forward as an instructor of Christians, he "could sit still and pine and die".¹⁾

And yet Dr. Arnold was constantly on the verge of doubt. His time was so entirely taken up with practical work that the decisive step was never taken.

But as soon as he began to reflect, then the rational side of his mind became evident. It was very painful to him to be always on the surface of things.²⁾

We have insisted on Dr. Arnold's character as well as on his ideas, because, with all his learning, energy, moral, earnestness and modern turn of mind he was the most powerful guide of his son *Matthew Arnold*, at a period when quick youths begin to take an interest in life and not unfrequently fix the course of their future mental and moral activity.

Matthew Arnold was born on December 24, 1822, at Laleham. In 1836 he was sent to Winchester. In the following year he was removed to Rugby where he lived in his father's house. There he enjoyed all the benefits of an intimate intercourse with his father, together with the advantages of the best Public School education that England could offer in those years. For, great changes had been effected at Rugby.

Dr. Thomas Arnold entered upon the duties of Head Master at Rugby at a period when the whole system of education in England had some prominent, and fatal defects. He was determined to make an assault upon the old routine, knowing well that the fight would not be an easy one.

Surely, this great scholar was fully conscious of the importance of scholarship. But the first revolution that he brought about was to make character first, scholarship second in importance.

"It is not necessary that this should be a school of three hundred, or one hundred, or fifty, but it is necessary that it should be a school of *Christian gentlemen*."

But it was a healthy and practical sort of Christianity which he desired to become the governing spirit of the school.

1) To T. Burbidge Esq., Oct. 1839.

2) To Rev. J. Hearn, May 1833.

In his school sermons preached in Rugby Chapel he directly attacked all the vices peculiar to a public school boy. — “If we do not speak of them plainly by their names, half of what we say will be lost in the air.”¹⁾ He kindled in the young hearts a fire that was never again extinguished. To these sermons the boys looked forward as to a real feast.²⁾

The discipline of the school was maintained by the headmaster, his assistant masters, and the pupils of the *Sixth Form*. In this latter arrangement lay the most original point of Dr. Arnold's disciplinary system. To these eldest boys he could appeal as to gentlemen; these boys more than all the others he could win over by his manliness to fight by his side.

But Dr. Arnold did not neglect the intellectual side of the school work. Intellectual and moral teaching were to go hand in hand. Thus he actually worked in the same direction as Herbart whose aim was *formale Bildung* — formative education. He incorporated the study of modern history, modern languages, and mathematics in the work of the school. He practised *extempore* free translation into English — without constructing each particular sentence word by word. He turned the attention of the boys away from mere verbal criticism and elegant scholarship to the profounder study of philosophy, in the broadest sense of the term, as applied to history, government and philosophy; at school he would gladly admit Dante and Gœthe “in the room of some Greek tragedians and of Horace, or at least mixed up along with them”.³⁾

Is it to be wondered at that out of this school there issued men with a serious turn of mind, and some with a propensity to throw off stereotyped errors, ready to face modern problems. This the student of Matthew Arnold's works must constantly bear in mind.

And yet there was a serious drawback in Dr. Arnold's system of education. He expected too much. He was a thorough Puritan. Now, Puritanism is a good thing; but too much of a good thing is bad. I object to a youth of sixteen who thinks,

¹⁾ Sermon V.

²⁾ Cf. Tom Brown VII.

³⁾ To Coleridge, Sept. 1836.

talks and writes like a man of sixty. It is unnatural and, moreover, it may become fatal. This is sufficiently proved by the life and correspondence of Arthur Hugh Clough who, when a boy at Rugby, wrote regular sermons to his younger brother.¹⁾

When Clough went up to Oxford, there was too much of the introspective spirit in him. He might have become a brilliant scholar, but began to doubt his own abilities and submitted to be "the lacquey and flunkey of the spirit of the age".²⁾

Matthew Arnold's mental powers did not get lost to the world. Fortunately, there was much of the Tom Brown spirit in him. He chiefly saw the bright side of Dr. Arnold's character, his sunny smile in the circle of his family.

We shall soon have occasion to see that Dr. Arnold's teaching struck root in the heart of his son Matthew. The young man looked up in love and veneration to his noble parent, but not with the same feeling of awe as his school-fellows. He always had the character of his father before him in its completeness, and thus he became serious without getting morbid, meditative without getting too introspective. He remained a serious young man, yet a *young* man for many years to come. He was as promising as Clough who was four years his senior. In 1840 he won an open scholarship at Balliol, and in 1841 a school exhibition. He became the intimate associate of Ward and Jowett, of Clough and of his own brother Thomas.

"His perfect self-possession, the sallies of his ready wit, the humorous turn which he could give to any subject that he handled, his gaiety, exuberance, versatility, audacity and unfailing command of words, made him one of the most popular and successful undergraduates that Oxford has ever known." ³⁾

The life at Oxford was pleasant enough. In regular sports Matthew Arnold does not seem to have taken an active interest. But he was fond of walking and riding in the beautiful envi-

¹⁾ Cf. Letter, Sept. 13, 1835, also: Letter to J. P. Gell Esq., Oct. 1835. To J. N. Simpkinson Esq., Jan. 18, 1836.

²⁾ Letter to J. P. Gell Esq. Oriel, May 1847.

³⁾ Sir J. Fitch.

rons of the University town. He did not do justice to his talents. "Matthew has gone fishing when he ought to be reading".¹⁾ This he did more than once.

When Matthew went up to Oxford, the great Tractarian Movement had not come to a close yet. There he heard Newman preach whose "words and thoughts were a religious music, — subtle, sweet, mournful", telling them to reflect that true faith does not covet comfort. — And there was the voice of Carlyle reaching the student's heart with true, pathetic eloquence. And more powerful, the voice of Gœthe. What moved him most in *Wilhelm Meister* "was that which, after all, will always move the young most, — the poetry, the eloquence".²⁾ And how powerfully were the hearts of the young men moved by Emerson's mighty call: "Trust thyself! . . . Great men have always done so, . . . betraying their perception that the Eternal was stirring at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being."

Of all these admirations that of Gœthe alone remained and even increased as Matthew Arnold advanced in life. "One of his most treasured books was a fine copy of the thirty-volume edition of Gœthe, which he had read through and assimilated."³⁾

But a heavy blow suddenly came upon the joyous undergraduate. On Sunday, June 12th 1842 his father, Dr. Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby School, since 1841 Regius Professor of History in the University of Oxford, unexpectedly died of heart-disease. To know what this meant to hundreds of noble hearts in England, read the closing chapter of *Tom Brown*!

The Doctor's work at Rugby had been much appreciated, and slowly the other Public Schools followed in his footsteps. Let us sum up all his merits by quoting a passage from the *Times*, July 17, 1896:

"No one made a deeper change in education. . . . One must have been at Rugby or Oxford in the thirties to appreciate

¹⁾ A. H. Clough.

²⁾ American Discourses. — M. A., when at Oxford, read the book in Carlyle's translation.

³⁾ T. H. Ward, *The Engl. Poets*.

the effect of Arnold's sermons on generous, susceptible youth. Even in the volume of national life as it flows to-day, there may be detected the effect of the pure, bracing stream which long ago joined it."

In 1844, Matthew Arnold took his degree in the Second Class only, but obtained a fellowship at Oriel in the following year. Clough was glad to give these tidings to Mr. Gell; "First of all; you will be glad to hear that Matthew Arnold is elected Fellow of Oriel. This was done on Friday last, March 28, just thirty years after his father's election. Mrs. Arnold is of course well pleased, *as also the venerable poet at Rydal, who had taken Matthew under his special protection.*" ¹⁾

After leaving Oxford, Matthew Arnold for some time assisted in the classical teaching at Rugby. Then he was appointed private secretary to the Marquis of Landsdowne. In 1851 his patron offered him an Inspectorship of Schools under the Privy Council. In the same year he married Frances, daughter of Mr. Justice Wightman. Now the son of Dr. Arnold entered the arena of public life and struggle. Thomas Arnold had once written to his friend Stanley: "May God grant to my sons, if they live to manhood, an unshaken love of truth, and a firm resolution to follow it for themselves, with an intense abhorrence of all party ties, save that one tie which binds them to the party of Christ against wickedness." ²⁾

Never was prayer more fully granted.

— — — — —

Matthew Arnold first introduced himself to the public as a poet. His *debut* as such takes us back to 1840, when, in his eighteenth year, he composed a Rugby prize poem, *Alaric at Rome*. Mr. Gosse discovered a copy at a second-hand bookshop; it was anonymously published by Combe and Crossley, Rugby 1840. The poem bore the inscription, in a school-boy's hand, "by M Arnold". Mr. Gosse applied to Matthew Arnold himself

¹⁾ Letter, April 2, 1845.

²⁾ Stanley I, p. 175.

— shortly before the poets' death — who wrote in reply : —
“Yes, *Alaric at Rome* is my Rugby prize poem, and I think it is better than my Oxford one, *Cromwell*; only you will see that I had been very much reading *Childe Harold*.”

The poem does honour to the poetical taste of a boy of seventeen, its chief merits being the rigorous form and soundness of thought. It is composed in the Spenserian stanza, with its fifth, sixth and seventh lines omitted. We give here, as a specimen, stanza I.

Unwelcome shroud of the forgotten dead,
Oblivion's dreary fountain, where art thou :
Why speed'st thou not thy deathlike wave to shed
O'er humbled pride, and self-reproaching woe :
Or time's stern hand, why blots it not away
The saddening tale that tells of sorrow and decay ? ¹⁾

Dr. E. H. Bradby, formerly headmaster of Haileybury, when a small boy at Rugby, heard Arnold recite the poem, and rapturously admired it.

In 1843, Matthew Arnold wrote a prize-poem, *Cromwell*. For his motto he had chosen a passage from Schiller :

Schrecklich ist es, deiner Wahrheit
Sterbliches Gefäss zu sein.

It was to be recited in the theatre at Oxford; but Commemoration Day in that year was so uproarious that the poem was never delivered aloud. This time, Matthew Arnold had been very much reading *Paradise Lost*.

In 1849 the literary critics had to deal with a little volume of poetry, — *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems, by A.*

The book was received as favourably as it deserved. It was evidently “the work of a scholar, a gentleman, and a true poet”.²⁾ It belonged to a far higher class than what had been noticed for some time. The purity of style had arrived, the delicate finish and the severity of metre were uncommon features in the poetry of the day. In *The Forsaken Merman* the contemporaries recognised a remarkable publication — “in our

¹⁾ Re-published by T. J. Wise, London 1893. — Printed for private circulation.

²⁾ Fraser's Mag., May 1849.

opinion, the most perfect of his narrative poems", wrote the Ed. Rev. Oct. 1888.

Yet this poetry could hardly be taxed higher than *promising*; for grave were its defects. "God has given the author rare faculties; but for every work done he must give account".¹⁾

— The poet had not produced any new thought; and many a number was practically unintelligible. The poet was bewildered by the perplexities of the age and his thoughts were not clear. *The New Sirens* — verses without a purpose, *The Gipsy Child* — reflections on the feelings of such a child, *In Utrumque paratus* — where there is much talk about a secret which we never see revealed, *Resignation* to do nothing — these are the works of a beginner, "a stripling".

It is hopeless to discover the meaning of these verses; there are in many passages simply words put together "to produce a peculiar phonetic effect". — *The Strayed Reveller* is absolutely devoid of rhythm and melody; it is mere prose.

Matthew Arnold could not yet understand that the measures of antiquity are not *a priori* suitable for modern verse, that the genius and capabilities of one language differ essentially from those of another, and that without melody poetry cannot exist.

But already in this volume Matthew Arnold's prime quality as a poet was conspicuous; he possessed a fair share of the painter's gift, a rare skill in sketching an occasional landscape. Yet, "we hope that he may achieve something which may come home to the heart, and secure the admiration of the public".²⁾

In October 1852, another little volume was published: *Empedocles on Etna and other Poems, By A.* Five hundred copies were printed. But the volume was withdrawn from circulation before fifty copies were sold. In 1853 there appeared in print *Poems, By Matthew Arnold*.

This volume is of high importance because of its preface. In Greek literature the author had found his own model of artistic composition. The objects of Poetry, among all nations, and at all times, are human actions. They possess an inherent

¹⁾ Fraser's M.

²⁾ Blackwood's Ed. Mag., Sept. 1849.

interest in themselves and are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the poet. "A great human action of a thousand years ago is more interesting than a smaller human action to-day." We see, Matthew Arnold was standing on the same grounds as the French dramatists of the seventeenth century. And he goes on: A young writer having recourse to Shakespeare as his model runs great risk of being too much attracted by special characteristics, e. g. his gift of expression, and of thus neglecting the *Architectonicè* of the whole. Keats' *Isabella*, which contains a greater number of happy single expressions than all the extant tragedies of Sophocles, produces a small effect because it is so loosely constructed. "Not certainly, that which is narrow in the ancients, nor that in which we can no longer sympathize, is to be our model; we must imitate the ancients by taking for all-important the choice of a subject; the necessity of accurate construction; and the subordinate character of expression." — We may add in passing that *Empedocles* was withdrawn because its author noticed in it serious defects of construction. Matthew Arnold was, however, urged upon to re-publish it, for instance by the Bishop of Derby and Mr. Swinburne.

The Neo-Classical Drama was a reaction to the extravagant school of poetry immediately preceding, to the fantastical and unwholesome *Life-Drama* of Alexander Smith. From 1858—67 no less than six classical dramas deserving the critic's notice were published.¹⁾

All these authors followed Matthew Arnold who demanded place in English literature for the forms of poetry which took their rise in Greece, in ages long past, among a people of a religion and of social habits entirely different from our own. Matthew Arnold took a further step. He wished to give English readers a knowledge of what Greek tragedy was, to teach them the secret of its beauty and power. This he might have done best by giving them some good translations.

¹⁾ *Merope*, by Matthew Arnold, 1858. *Atalanta in Caledon*, 1866. *Philoctetes*, by W. Lancaster, M. A. (!), 1866. *Orestes*, by W. Lancaster, 1867. *The Sorrows of Hypsipyle*, by Thomas Ashe, 1867. *Prometheus Unbound*, by G. A. Simcox, M. A. (!).

The author of *Merope* hardly reached the standard of his own theory. First of all we are struck with the want of unity. The poet tried to write a tragedy about a subject which is not tragic. The subject is *transient* grief from terror. Moreover, the poet does not tell us whether Polyphontes is good or bad; here we have a doubtful character instead of one in which good and bad qualities are mixed. But if we have no notion of a man, we cannot care for him. The whole drama is destitute of life: it is a puppet-show. In the choruses, the poet eschews rhymes and, for instance in the second chorus, there are many passages bordering on prose. *Merope* is a school exercise of a Professor of Poetry.

It must be understood that Matthew Arnold's theories as developed in the Preface of 1853 only refer to dramatic poetry. The classical scholar was only one side of him. There laboured in the son of Dr. Arnold thoughts of a deeper and decidedly modern character which he revealed in most of his poems that have not been mentioned yet.

A few remarks on Matthew Arnold's narrative poems may follow here and then we shall discuss the rest of his poetry as one whole.

The chief merits of *Sohrab and Rustum* lie in its great simplicity of style and in a discriminate use of those homely words which are characteristic of truly epic poetry.

"Thank heaven", exclaimed a reviewer, "here is the man for whom we have been longing for years; a man who has written two whole pages without the slightest taint of *poetry* in it!"¹⁾

Tristram and Iseult contains beautiful passages, but it is not distinguished by what Matthew Arnold expected of a truly poetical work: it is sadly wanting in 'Architectonic'.

Some reviewer of *Balder Dead* has to tell us many things about "the simple, yet grand mythology of the old Icelandic bards, such as it is exhibited in the Scandinavian Eddas", and he thinks it is singularly suited for the epic such as Homer would have built up.²⁾ — I must confess that the *Edda* when

¹⁾ Fraser's Mag., Feb. 1854.

²⁾ Dublin Univ. Mag., Feb. 1855.

read in the original, never made this impression on me. There is so much life and passion in these lines that they are more akin to dramatic poetry. One thing is certain, that *Balder Dead* is too long and wearying a poem that it could bear in any way a comparison with the Old Icelandic songs.

Thus we come to the conclusion that neither of Matthew Arnold's narrative poems possesses those qualities which secure a lasting popularity to a work of art.

When we collect in Matthew Arnold's works the various passages referring to poetry, we obtain a clear insight into the principles which guided him as a poet and literary critic.

The revolt effected by the friends of science is notorious. Their aim is to deprive letters of the too great place they have hitherto filled in men's estimation.¹⁾ But the time will come when men are ripe to treat art and science with the same kind of seriousness as conduct.²⁾ For culture is of like spirit with poetry and follows one law with it. Poetry must brace the moral fibre. For, the great poet applies ideas to life. A wider meaning than usual is to be given to the term moral. Whatever bears on the question "how to live" comes under it. Through this profound application of ideas to life poetry becomes at last a criticism of life.³⁾

The very essence of poetry shows us the way in which poetical works of importance can be created. The poet must be a contemplator; his predominant quality must be a steady, deep-searching survey, a firm conception of the facts of human life. The poet must take in the spirit of his time, and unless a poet had done this, Matthew Arnold's interest in him was only slight.⁴⁾

We are at the end of a period, and have to deal with the facts and symptoms of a new period on which we are entering.

1) Cf. Lit. and Dogma.

2) Cult. and An.

3) Essay on Wordsworth.

4) Letter to J. Dykes Campbell, Sept. 22, 1864.

Now we understand why Matthew Arnold wrote to Lady de Rothschild as follows:

"I mean, for instance, I do not think Tennyson a grand and puissant esprit, and therefore I do not really set much store by him, in spite of his popularity; but is it possible for me to say this? I think not."¹⁾

What Matthew Arnold means by the absence of "a grand and puissant esprit" in Tennyson's poems is the want of modern thought. In this Tennyson is so wholly different from Goethe and Wordsworth.²⁾

A great poet must know life and the world before dealing with them in poetry. And our present time is thoroughly philosophical. It must, therefore, produce philosophical poetry if the new poetry aspires to the epithet "original". We may not forget that Matthew Arnold here uses the word "philosophical" in its popular sense, in the sense of Goethe and Wordsworth, meaning thereby the way of looking at life and the world. No man had a keener sense of his duty as a poet than Keats. He held that with a great poet the sense of beauty overcame every other consideration. And yet he could say resolutely:

"I know nothing, I have read nothing; and I mean to follow Solomon's directions: 'Get learning, get understanding!' There is but one way for me. The road lies through application, study and thought, I will pursue it."

Matthew Arnold's new standard of poetical criticism is too narrow. No doubt, poetry may be a criticism of life; but it may also be something else.³⁾ The critic's views are, however, modified to a certain extent by his enthusiasm for poetic beauty. No poetry without science, or at least, without knowledge; but no true science without poetry. For without poetry, our science will appear incomplete. We must accept Wordsworth's definition of poetry: "the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science — the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge," — because poetry is thought and art

¹⁾ Letter, Sept. 25, 1864.

²⁾ Letter to his mother, May 7, 1848.

³⁾ Cf. Alfred Austin: *Old and New Canons of Poetical Criticism*. The Contemp. R., Dec. 1881.

in one. And the best poetry is what we want, for it will be found to have a power of forming, sustaining, and delighting us, as nothing else can.¹⁾

Poetry is the criticism of life, but made conformably to the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. Penetration in matters religious and philosophical are valueless without soul, and soul is valueless without penetration; both these are delicate qualities, and, even in those who have them, easily lost.²⁾

What we want in our time is imaginative reason.³⁾

Joubert said that the true tears were those which were called forth by the *beauty* of poetry. Whether the metaphysician will ever adopt Joubert's ruling is uncertain; but the man of letters, — add, the poet — whenever he has to speak of — or to deal with — metaphysics, will do well to adopt it; for it is better to employ words in their natural sense rather than in their popular sense. It would be erroneous to think that the language of science is the most perfect simply because it deals with clearly formulated definitions. The language of Poetry is more perfect, because poetry is simply the most beautiful impressive and widely effective mode of saying things, and hence its importance.⁴⁾

If poetry awakens in us an intimate sense of our relations with the universe, it has attained its supreme power. If we feel to be in complete harmony with things, a serene calm enters into our breast. This sense may be illusive, but it remains one of the highest powers of poetry to awaken it in us. Science does not give us the same sense; it appeals to a limited faculty, whereas poetry appeals to the whole man. — In the best that has been thought and said in the world Matthew Arnold, as a matter of course, includes the work of the great observers and knowers of Nature. But he cannot think it advisable to make natural science the main part of education. The power of beauty and of conduct is as important as the power of intellect and knowledge.⁵⁾

1) Cf. The Study of Poetry.

2) Essay on Joubert.

3) Pagan and mediæval religious sentiment.

4) Essay on Keats.

5) Cf. American Discourses.

But then it is of high importance not to give to "poetry" too wide a meaning. We ought to be conscious that there is an essential difference between imaginative production in verse, and imaginative production in prose.¹⁾

The sense of our relations with the universe is magic; a magically vivid interpretation of nature constitutes the special charm and power of poetical effect. Keats possessed the two master-qualities of a poet. He who said

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever

and who wrote in a letter, "I have loved the principle of beauty in all things" — saw things in their truth. He knew that to see things in their beauty is to see them in their truth. Therefore he has the gift of natural magic, and in this he ranks with Shakespeare.²⁾

And it is the duty of men to work that the sense of beauty should become more general. For, if morals are an important matter with us, we are not in the right way, if at the same time the idea of beauty, harmony and complete human perfection, is wanting amongst us.³⁾

Though we should like the Welsh to step out of their narrow circle of culture conditioned by their tenacity in sticking to their language, yet we are filled with admiration for them when we see how the Eisteddfods can awaken a great enthusiasm in the whole people.

In England it is a good thing that the middle class are attracted by the theatre. It proves that they have a vital need for *beauty*, for intellect and knowledge, for social life and manners. The nation at large does well to concern itself about an influence so important to national life and manners as the theatre.

We have shown that Matthew Arnold's theory coincides with what a critic said in 1849:

"The man who cannot sing the present age, and transfigure it into melody, or who cannot, in writing of past ages, draw

¹⁾ A French Play in London.

²⁾ Cf. Essay on Keats.

³⁾ Cf. Culture and An.

from them some eternal lesson about this one. has no right to be versifying at all." ¹⁾)

Already in his first volume Matthew Arnold exhibited a certain morbid way of looking at things. And in proportion as the Oxford scholar, the student of books, became a student of life, his hereditary puritanism grew stronger and finally produced the key-note of all his poetry.²⁾ Matthew Arnold left the ancient subjects and acted according to his own theory: he became a poet of his age.

By what thoughts were the serious minds of that time agitated?

The year 1832 marks the beginning of a new era in the realm of thought and poetry. W. Scott, Keats, Byron, Shelley were dead; Southey, Wordsworth and Coleridge had accomplished the most influential part of their work. A period of trouble and agitation followed. First of all, a social and political revolution was threatening. Carlyle was aware of the stupendous dangers and relied for safety on loyal, obedient men whose hearts were touched by a keen sense of duty. Charles Kingsley, too, tried to solve the social problem. He set new ideals before his fellow-men and thus stirred up their courage and activity, as qualities more suited to the time than those of the modern mediævalists.

In the realm of positive science, great deeds had been accomplished. In 1838, the building materials had been in part provided; but science was not yet pervaded by that powerful idea of unity which, a few years later, was to quicken mental activity in all directions. Hard battles were waged over the bloody field of theology; more of these in part III of this essay.

The first decisive step was taken in Geology, by Lyell and his pupil A. Geikie. The crust of the earth was no longer considered isolated, as an object by itself. The phenomena observable on the outer shell of a cooling world were considered in their relations. In this Geology followed Astronomy.

¹⁾ Fraser's Mag.

²⁾ *Poems*, second series, by Matthew Arnold, 1855. *New Poems*, by Matthew Arnold, 1867, second ed. 1868. 1869: *Poems*, in two vols. 1885: *Poems*, in three vols. 1890: *Poetical Works*, in one volume.

Before Darwin Evolution, in its astronomical development, had already formulated itself with perfect distinctness. Kant and Laplace made an attempt to account for the genesis of the cosmos by the continuous action of physical and natural principles. Instead of miracles, the new school saw slow development. In the place of the Noachian deluge, they put the great ice age.

In 1859, Darwin published *The Origin of Species*. Now the new start definitely began. Huxley, Spencer and Wallace helped to convert the whole world. The result of these researches we may sum up as follows:

We must grant the existence of a prime organism or group of organisms plus the fact of reproduction with heredity and variations — and the survival of the fittest.

For the present we must bear in mind that the period between 1849 and 1867, during which Matthew Arnold composed the whole bulk of his poetry, was a period of fermentation. Science had still to direct all her principal efforts towards accumulating new facts. It is true, many inventions had been utilised and perfected. The *saeculum realisticum* had not been without obvious results. On entering the Exhibition of 1851 and seeing all the engines at work, Macaulay felt as if he were entering St. Peter's.

But the generation of 1840—50 had been of too sanguine a temper. All those keen hopes that had appeared to the people as an aurora of a new age could not be realised so soon. The new engines took the place of many working hands. On the other hand, thousands of people deserted their native places in the country where their ancestors had been happy for generations, to seek a new existence in large manufacturing towns where a terrifying amount of misery sprung up and set serious men a-thinking.

But the same feeling of unrest became acute in other directions. The religious question had not slumbered. In 1846 George Eliot published her translation of Strauss's *Leben Jesu*. But the *Phases of Faith* (1850) by Francis Newman, brother of Henry, was a work of a more serious character, for it could not be rejected on the plea that its author wrote about history and myths, without appearing to have studied the question.

Newman set before his readers the programme of the impending Biblical researches. The doctrine of the Church does not agree with the Scriptures, and in the Scriptures themselves there are contradictions. It is true, Religion is called into existence by the inner instincts of the soul, by her longing for the sympathy of God with her, and for her communion with God. These instincts and longings, however, must be purified by reason.

And soon there followed a stately number of scientific minds who did not shrink from looking the negative side of the problem full in the face, and who created a philosophical basis for rigorous reasoning methods to be followed in the critical studies of the Bible. The chain of these theologians reaches down to our own time: Colenso, Seeley, John Caird, Thomas Green, Rob. Flint, Thomas Scott, James Martineau.

The first half of the nineteenth century, particularly the last two decades of it, were decidedly optimistic. Besides the mighty growth of science, great political revolutions were impending. People all over Europe were moved by a strong and growing feeling of discontent; they were looking forward to a radical change which was to bring better times. Consequently they were held up by optimistic views. But after 1850 the age of pessimism arrived. It was the reign of Schopenhauer. All the fervent hopes of the people had been frustrated. This new mood was dominating not only in political questions, but just as much in the domain of science and letters. The new natural science was characterised by views which must needs lead to stagnation. The creative power of science was denied. Science can only be descriptive. What goes beyond description is not science, but poetry. — There is only one way of salvation possible: death of the will.

Matthew Arnold is the poet of this time.

"My poems represent, on the whole, the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century." ¹⁾

He found himself in a period of transition, of confusion. This tumult of transition made the poet's head

¹⁾ Letter to his Mother, June 5, 1869.

swim. ¹⁾ His first feeling, when thinking of the world, was that of resignation.

I say: Fear not! Life still
Leaves human effort scope.
But, since life teems with ill,
Nurse no extravagant hope;
Because thou must not dream, thou need'st not then despair.

Empedocles.

Once read thy own breast right,
And thou hast done with fears;
Man gets no other light,
Search he a thousand years.
Sink in thyself: there ask what ails thee, at that shrine!

Empedocles.

Complete resignation, however, is impossible.

Is the calm thine of stoic souls, who weigh
Life well, and find it wanting, nor deplore;
But in disdainful silence turn away,
Stand mute, self-centred, stern, and dream no more?

To a Gipsy-Child.

Not milder is the general lot
Because our spirits have forgot,
In action's dizzying eddy whirl'd,
The something that infects the world.

Resignation.

And from resignation, the poet falls into solitude and isolation.

Hail to the spirit which dared
Trust its own thoughts, before yet
Echoed her back by the crowd!
Hail to the courage which gave
Voice to its creed, ere the creed
Won consecration from time.

Haworth Churchyard.

¹⁾ But now the old is out of date,
The new is not yet born,
And who can be *alone* elate,
While the world lies forlorn?

Obermann once more.

Resolve to be thyself; and know that he,
Who finds himself, loses his misery.

Self-Dependence.

And the sad note soon prevails. The poet feels there is
no hope of ever solving the mystery of existence.

When the soul, growing clearer,
Sees God no nearer;
When the soul, mounting higher,
To God comes no nigher;
Save, oh! save!

Stagirius.

But what before us we know not,
And we know not what shall succeed.

The Future.

There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life.

A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart which beats
So wild, so deep in us — to know
Whence our lives come and where they go.
And many a man in his own breast then delves,
But deep enough, alas! none ever mines.

The Buried Life.

Vain labour! Deep and broad, where none may see,
Spring the foundations of that shadowy throne
Where man's one nature, queen-like, sits alone,
Centred in a majestic unity.

Written in Butler's Sermons.

Our vaunted life is one long funeral,
Men dig graves with bitter tears
For their dead hopes.

A Question.

Yet, through the hum of torrent lone,
And brooding mountain-bee,
There sobs I know not what ground-tone
Of human agony.

Only Goethe and Wordsworth have been able to see their way.

Obermann.

There is an overlaboured Power which

Of earth, and air, and sea,
In men, and plants, and stones,
Hath toil perpetually,
And travails, pants, and moans;

Fain would do all things well, but sometimes fails in strength.

Empedocles.

And the calm moonlight seems to say:

Hast thou then still the old unquiet breast,
Which neither deadens into rest,

Nor ever feels the fiery glow

That whirls the spirit from itself away,

But fluctuates to and fro,

Never by passion quite possess'd

And never quite benumb'd by the world's sway?

A Summer Night.

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.

But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

Retreating, to the breath

Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear

And naked shingles of the world.

Dover Beach.

Or is it that some Force, too wise, too strong,

Even for yourselves to conquer or beguile,

Sweeps earth, and heaven, and men, and gods along,

And the great powers we serve, themselves may be

Slaves of a tyrannous necessity.

Mycerinus.

Finally, after hopelessness and sadness, downright pessimism
and despair. The world

Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain.

Dover Beach.

That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old world-pain —
Say, will it never heal?

Eternal passion!
Eternal pain!

Philomela.

We but dream we have our wish'd-for powers,
Ends we seek we never shall attain.

Self-Deception.

Mirth to-day and vine-bound tresses,
And to-morrow — folded palms;
Is this all? this balanced measure?
Could life run no happier way.

The New-Sirens.

Ah! let us make no claim,
On Life's incognisable sea,
To too exact a steering of our way.

Human Life.

I, on men's impious uproar hurl'd,
Think often, as I hear them rave,
That peace has left the upper world
And now keeps only in the grave.

Lines written in Kensington Gardens.

Ah, let me weep and tell my pain,
And on thy shoulder rest my head!

Before this teased o'erlabour'd heart
For ever leaves its vain employ,
Dead to its deep habitual smart,
And dead to hopes of future joy.

Faded Leaves.

The poet keenly feels the lack of human kindness in the world:

O frivolous mind of man,
Light ignorance, and hurrying, unsure thoughts!
Though man bewails you not,
How I bewail you!

Dejaneira.

He wept: "The Earth hath kindness,
The sea, the starry poles;
Earth, sea, and sky, and God above —
But, ah, not human souls!"

The Neckan.

The reader of these verses might feel inclined to apply to Matthew Arnold's whole lyric poetry the judgment of a critic: "We fairly confess, that if we thought the above lines (To Fausta) were an accurate reflex of the ordinary mood of the author, we should infinitely prefer supping in company with the nearest sexton."¹⁾

Matthew Arnold's letters bear testimony that their writer was passionately fond of Nature.

"It was nearly dark when I left the Weybridge Station, but I could make out the wide sheet of the gray Thames gleaming through the general dusk as I came out on Chertsey Bridge."²⁾

Laleham on the Thames and Fox How in the Lake District had not failed to nourish this taste for natural beauty which was an inheritance of Dr. Arnold. In Nature the poet of pessimism found his highest consolation. He never attained that Magic which he praised as a master quality in a poet. Of course, it was in her *ethical* effect that Nature appealed to the pupil of Wordsworth. He felt that God is imminent in Nature and that man, too, forms part of Nature.

Unquiet souls,

— In the dark fermentation of Earth,
In the never idle workshop of nature,
In the eternal movement,
Ye shall find yourselves again.

Epilogue to Haworth Churchyard.

And in many poems he derives moral and spiritual teaching from her:

We, O Nature, depart,
Thou survivest us! this,
This, I know, is the law.

¹⁾ Blackwood's Ed. Mag., Sept. 1849.

²⁾ Letter to his Mother, Jan. 2, 1848.

Sink, O youth, in thy soul!
Yearn to the greatness of Nature;
Rally the good in the depths of thyself!

The Youth of Man.

The thought of her permanency gave his spirit rest. Let us follow her example in doing steady work, silent and restful.

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,

Of toil unsever'd from tranquillity.

Quiet Work.

Full consolation Nature could not give him, because she does not point beyond the grave. Where Nature ends, man begins. The only truth we actually know is the revelation of the soul, of conscience, of morals. Contrary to his master, Matthew Arnold renounced the hope of any discernable common law reigning in the human spirit and the outward world; this is one reason for the tone of sadness which pervades all his poetry.

The coming age will be the age of ethics; if the poetry of the future wants to attain real and lasting power, it must be decidedly ethical. Consequently the poetry of pessimism, when considered in its subject-matter only, is in direct opposition to the spirit of the new age. When the reign of pessimism is over — and it actually is over — Matthew Arnold's poetry has ceased to be of importance unless it can be saved by superior qualities of *form*.

Here we have to refer to that part of this essay which deals with Arnold's theory of the grand style (Chapter IV). Thus we arrive at the point from which Matthew Arnold's poetical form appears in its true light: he might be of the classical school of the eighteenth century.

Most critics, probably all, agree that Matthew Arnold is a nineteenth century Gray. The similarity is, indeed, striking. Gray was the most learned man of his time in England. Matthew Arnold was prevented by his official duties from doing sound scientific work; but there was hardly a contemporary of his so well-informed in all the branches of know-

ledge. Gray wrote very little poetry, and Matthew Arnold produced very little that will last. Both poets found in Greek poetry models of precision and delicacy which they imitated. Both were conscientious workers in the direction of form. The faults of both poets are the results of an exaggerated taste for rhetoric.

It is curious to notice how towards the end of his life Matthew Arnold himself severely sentenced the over-worship of form. In 1883, as president of the Wordsworth society, he approvingly quoted the following words of Goethe taken from Eckermann:

"Es ist immer ein Zeichen einer unproduktiven Zeit, wenn sie so ins Kleinliche und Technische geht, und ebenso ist es ein Zeichen eines unproduktiven Individuums, wenn es sich mit dergleichen befasst." ¹⁾ — And to this passage we might add another which he quoted from the same source.

"Two kinds of dilettanti there are in poetry: he who neglects the indispensable mechanical part, and thinks he has done enough if he shows spirituality and feeling; and he who seeks to arrive at poetry by mere mechanism, in which he can acquire an artisan's readiness, and is without soul and matter. The first does most harm to art, and the last to himself."

Matthew Arnold's mania for form has found an enthusiastic admirer in Mr. Swinburne:

"The more love a man has for perfection, the more faith in form, the more instinct for art, the fewer will his early believers be, and the better worth having." ²⁾

Mr. Swinburne here speaks *pro domo*, and successfully too; for he had something to say in his poetry, and this fact again reminds us of Arnold's speech in the Wordsworth Society:

"Wordsworth is yet so profoundly impressible, because he has really something to say." ³⁾

Matthew Arnold as a poet is less remarkable for what he says than for his manner of saying it. And yet even his form is open to criticism.

¹⁾ Febr. 11, 1831.

²⁾ Fortn. Rev., Oct. 1867.

³⁾ Cf. W. A. Knight, *Wordsworthiana*.

Thyrsis, a poem in which Arnold *had* something to say, is a perfect model of style. But more than this has been found in it.

“Its five opening lines are to me the most musical in all known realm of verse.”¹⁾

How changed is here each spot man makes or fills!
In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the same;
The village street its haunted mansion lacks,
And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,
And from the roofs the twisted chimney-stacks —

Of what character is the musical element in these verses? It consists in the agreeable variation of vowel-sounds. But even here, where Matthew Arnold is at his best, his ear is defective for rhythm. And can we talk of music in poetry if rhythm is wanting? Arnold's lines are not sufficiently flowing. He was not musical.

“We are both of us by way of being without ear for music.”²⁾

This defect of his ear makes itself felt in most of his poems. As regards rhythm, Clough was the exact opposite of Arnold.

How light we go, how soft we skim,
And all in open moonlight swim!
Ah, gondolier, slow, slow, more slow!
We go; but wherefore thus should go?
Ah, let not muscle all too strong
Beguile, betray thee to our wrong!
On to the landing, onward. Nay,
Sweet dream, a little longer stay!
On to the landing; here. And, ah!
Life is not as the gondola.

From *Dipsychus*.

Arnold's blank verse in *Sohrab and Rustum* and in *Balder Dead* is the outgrowth of his classical studies. It is always elegant, though rather slow in *Balder*. His poems of rhymed *recitative* are always on the verge of prose.³⁾ Occasionally he

¹⁾ Mr. Swinburne.

²⁾ Letter to Mrs. Forster, Aug. 1, 1863.

³⁾ Cf. *Youth and Calm*.

even falls into descriptive poetry and fails, as in *The Church of Brou* where he gives a dull description of a painted window.

Matthew Arnold never had *le léger de la muse*. There is not one single poem by him that flows from the heart like a natural spring, in natural forms. Spontaneity has never been his quality.

Nothing better has been done to show the real merit of Matthew Arnold's poetry than the selecting of passages for a *Matthew Arnold Birthday Book*.¹⁾ Here our attention is called to one short passage only and distracted from the poem as a whole which too often fails in point of structure and definite aim. We are charmed with the finish of details which reflect a highly cultured mind. Thus, in spite of their defects, a highly cultivated reader will always find Matthew Arnold's verses refreshing; he will feel himself attracted by their statuesque beauty and grace.

As has been shown before, Matthew Arnold expresses his sympathies with, and his regrets for, a faith he cannot share.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this stranger disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife —
Fly hence, our contact fear!

— — — — —
Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade.

The Scholar-Gipsy.

But to judge from his poetry, he does not feel for the vital problem; he reflects on it. He composes coldly and phlegmatically. True, his heart could not be cold when he remembered how

The complaining millions of men
Darken in labour and in pain.²⁾

But as soon as he touched his pen he asked himself: "How am I to express this? How can I attain to the grand style?"

1) Arranged by his daughter Eleanor. London 1883.

2) The Youth of Nature.

At any rate, I must write faultless verses." And thus the feeling was suppressed, and thought and intellect alone prevailed. His poetry is the poetry of ideas — let us add, of a very few ideas. "He has no passion, no kindling flame of fervour, no heart-force. He speaks from the mind to the mind."¹⁾

His lyric poetry is too condensed, and for this reason never carries us along.

"Arnold analyses himself as Man rather than as a man.*) Even in his most personal lyrics, he seems to keep his fingers on his pulse."²⁾

"His head not only predominates, but exalts his somewhat languid heart."³⁾

But true lyric song never bursts from the intellect alone. Arnold never finds an accent like Shelley in Stanzas written in dejection at Naples, or Wordsworth in his "Ode to Immortality". And how strange! he admired the spiritual *passion* of Wordsworth (River Dudden). "To match it, one must go to the ocean of Shakespeare."⁴⁾

"When there comes in poetry what I may call the lyrical cry, this transfigures everything, makes everything grand; the simplest form (!) may be even an advantage, because the flame of the emotion glows through and through it more easily."⁵⁾

*) Therefore, Arnold's poetry is not always free from affectation. Indeed, his versification has been satirised very cleverly by W. H. Mallock.

Softly the evening descends,
Violet and soft, the sea
Adds to the silence, below
Pleasant and cool on the beach
Breaking; yes, and a breeze
Calm as the twilight itself
Furtively sighs through the dusk,
Listlessly lifting my hair,
Fanning my thought-wearied brow.

The New Republic.

1) W. J. Dawson.

2) Ed. Rev., Oct. 1888.

3) C. Stedman.

4) Wordsworthiana.

5) Homer.

Thus, not only in consequence of his form, but also owing to his manner of treating lyric subjects, a manner partly derived from his mania for form, Matthew Arnold cannot be placed among the great poets.

We have seen that the spiritual and ethical teaching of Nature brings more pain than consolation to Matthew Arnold. But from Nature quiet joys and anodynes are derived as well. The poet makes us feel her beauty and delicacy, and so he is enabled to see the object in itself and to calmly paint it, putting aside, for the moment, all spiritual lessons it discloses.

Modern English poetry delights in descriptions of Nature and scenery. But these descriptions occupy too vast a place. "The horticulture and garden plot school of poetry has passed the bounds of toleration."¹⁾

By a wise concentration Matthew Arnold succeeded in rendering his landscape-paintings refreshing. But he always animates them by some shade of feeling. His gift for *elegiac verse* can be noticed in his first poems, *Alaric* and *Cromwell*. Yea, even into his best epic poem, *Sohrab and Rustum*, there glides the elegiac key. The closing lines of this poem are beautiful in themselves, though utterly out of place.

The conviction urges itself upon us that all those poems of Matthew Arnold in which the elegiac key predominates are his most successful pieces. Rugby Chapel, Stanzas from Carnac, A Southern Night, Obermann, Thyrsis, Memorial Verses are truly remarkable pieces which will, in all probability, last.

To Matthew Arnold's various unquestionable merits as a poet we have to add one more of the highest moment for the history of his mind. It is true, the bulk of his poetry is pessimistic and leaves behind it an impression of weakness. But there are dispersed in his poems some verses out of which there issues a glimmer of hope, a call to action, and which timidly foretell the coming new period in the author's activity.

¹⁾ The Bishop of Derby.

No, no! the energy of life may be
Kept on after the grave, but not begun;
And he who flagg'd not in the earthly strife,
From strength to strength advancing — only he,
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.

Immortality.

Charge once more then, and be dumb!
Let the victors, when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall.

The Last Word.

Children of men! not that your age excel
In pride of life the ages of your sires,
But that ye think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well,
The Friend of man desires.

Progress.

Mind is the spell which governs earth and heaven.
Man has a mind with which to plan his safety;
Know that, and help thyself!

Empedocles.

And therefore, O ye elements! I know —
Ye know it too — it hath been granted me
Not to die wholly, not to be all enslaved.
I feel it in this hour.

Empedocles.

For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labour-house vast
Of-being, is practised that strength.
Zealous, beneficent, firm!

Rugby Chapl.

*What still of strength is left, employ
That end to help attain;
One common wave of thought and joy
Lifting mankind again.*

Obermann Once more.

Matthew Arnold did not fall a victim to pessimism like his friend Clough. From such a fate he was saved by his sunny nature no less than by favourable circumstances. When he came up to Oxford, the mastery of Newman over the University was already on the wane. Arnold never had the ascetic devotion that was needed to follow the great teacher at St. Mary's. A few years later, when he became more manly and serious, he had moments when he was haunted by pessimism. But his manner of living was not that of a pessimist. He had a wife and children, whom he loved tenderly and for whom he had to work. His official duties as a school-inspector were extremely heavy. Then he was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1857 and re-elected in 1865. This post he kept till 1867. This dignity added some new duties to the old ones. His inspectorship he held till April 30, 1886, when he resigned, after a service of thirty-five years. At the request of successive Royal Commissions of Enquiry into the educational system of England he paid three visits to the Continent and had to report on his observations.

If thus at first he had to subdue his pessimism through necessity, he finally got out of the struggle by conviction. It is only fair to insist on this point. Matthew Arnold consciously remodelled his way of looking at the world. The blind adversaries of his social and religious teachings were never tired of pointing out the quality of sadness that pervades his poetry. In Arnold, the prose-writer, they had learned to know and to dread one of the most dangerous enemies of the traditional theology. And they insisted on making people believe that his sad poetry was the outgrowth of his new gospel. Such a statement is entirely erroneous. After 1854 — *Merope* excepted — artistically and morally the exclusive Hellenic¹⁾ spirit was overthrown. The poet began to hope for the future. After 1867 he wrote hardly any poetry. The publication of his prose-essays treating of society and religion began in 1867, with *Culture and Anarchy*. There we have a new Arnold, a man of clear and reformed opinions; the poet of pessimism has ceased to exist.

¹⁾ Cf. p. 49.

This change had been gradually effected. We have quoted some verses of an optimistic touch which may be found scattered through all his poems. In the *Essays in Criticism* collected in 1865, the germs of his later essays are included. The thesis of 'Culture and Anarchy' we may discover in 'The Function of Criticism', that of 'Literature and Dogma' in 'Marcus Aurelius'.

The final rupture with the past speaks highly in favour of Arnold's character. His poetry had been much appreciated by the most select minds of his time. And now the moment had come when he felt a severe call to duty, when all his hereditary Puritan ardour broke forth; and this call he obeyed. Whatever errors we shall detect in his new teaching, never for a moment shall we feel as if he had not spoken from conviction. And to his conviction he stood, for the most time alone in the fire of battle, railed at and chafed at by the majority of his nation while Tennyson basked himself in the sun of court-favour. With a few verses the Poet Laureate had settled his accounts with the spirit of the age, and now he could go on writing what the English liked to hear and accepting their thanks for not troubling their minds too much. One may like Tennyson for all this; but it is an act of justice to plead in favour of Matthew Arnold who, it seemed, by those in power was left to perform the dance of death in the elementary schools because his opinions were not sufficiently palatable in high quarters. Like Ulrich von Hutten he said: "Ich hab's gewagt — I have dared," and when he listened to the many angry voices around him, he remembered what his father had said when he was in a similar position:

"δέχομαι τὸν οἶονον — I accept the omen."

There is a passage in *Impedocles*, in which Matthew Arnold, unconscious perhaps of the full scope of his words, pronounces a sentence of death on pessimism:

Man errs not that he deems
His welfare his true aim,
He errs because he dreams
The world does but exist that welfare to bestow.

As he advanced in life, he more and more became convinced that the world has other work to do besides providing for our welfare; that we must cease to expect subservience to our own ends from all forces and influences of existing things. ~~But this may not prevent us from attempting to achieve the best that lies in our power. Man is conscious of his higher nature, and only by fulfilling the dictates thereof he becomes great.~~

Let us penetrate into the new ideas exposed by Matthew Arnold in his prose-works.

Mr. Burns is exceedingly rich.

This may be true, but he is not a gentleman.

These words might be taken from a novel; they might also be taken from life; you can hear such like phrases in any drawing-room. There is a great magic about this word "gentleman" and the thing it designates as well. "A gentleman is a well-educated person" — thus may run the general definition. In his presence an educated person of any country will feel comfortable; he will at once discover some indefinable link between his mind and that of a "gentleman".

It has been one of the principal efforts of Matthew Arnold's life and writings to convince the English that the 'gentlemen' of his time were not, in fact, educated persons. Matthew Arnold has been the great apostle of *Culture* in England. Choosing for a starting-point the book entitled *Culture and Anarchy* we shall try to show what Arnold really meant by Culture

In the Preface the author makes us acquainted with the purpose of his work.

"The whole scope of the following essay is to recommend culture as the great help out of our present difficulties, culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world." — Culture reaches human perfection through *all* the voices of human experience: art, science, poetry, philosophy, history.

"The power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, the power of social life and manners — these are the means towards our end, which is civilization." ¹⁾

¹⁾ The Future of Liberalism.

How can we get to know the best that has been thought and said in the world? Culture is reading, but reading with a purpose to guide it, and with system. In 1885 Matthew Arnold wrote to his eldest daughter, Mrs. Whitridge in New York: "I hope you will gradually form your own habits, and that you will neither give up walking nor give up reading. Keep always something going besides the mere novel of the hour."

Even reading bad books may do some good:

"It inspires a man with the curiosity to read, it gives him the habit of reading, and the habit becomes a necessity."¹⁾

Nothing could promote culture more effectually than cheap books. Matthew Arnold felt that the three-shilling book was the great want in England. He put his theory into practice; many of his prose-works have been published in half-crown editions.

Real culture manifests itself through *sweetness and light*. The cultured person will have εὐφροία, a finely tempered nature, grace and peace by the annulment of his ordinary self through the mildness and sweet reasonableness of Jesus Christ.²⁾ Our conduct must be marked by *epieikeia*, "that which above all things has an air of truth and likelihood, that which, therefore, above all things, is prepossessing . . . it puts a thing in such a way before man that he feels disposed and eager to lay hold of it."³⁾

But in England the propagation of culture meets with serious impediments. Here the population divides itself into three classes: The Aristocracy, the Middle Classes and the Lower Classes. Arnold calls them the *Barbarians*, the *Philistines*, and the *Populace*. It must be well understood that he does not employ these terms in an entirely disapproving sense. For him they signify deficiencies of character and manners which are opposed to the emancipation of thought: but the author never denies that each class is endowed with many good qualities.

The Barbarians brought with them a staunch individualism. They had the passion for field-sports. They were chivalrous.

¹⁾ Copyright.

²⁾ Cf. Modern Dissent.

³⁾ Last Essays on Church and Rel.

But all this culture was an exterior culture mainly. This class are full of courage, of a high spirit, and self-confidence. With Mr. Tennyson they celebrate "the great broad-shouldered genial Englishman", with his "sense of duty", his "reverence for the laws", and his "patient force", who saves us from the "revolts, republics, revolutions . . ." ¹⁾

By which class is the *State* represented? By the Aristocracy, Carlyle thought. Culture helps us to find an answer. Hardly the Aristocracy, for they are by the very nature of things inaccessible to ideas.

"One has often wondered whether upon the whole earth there is anything so unintelligent, so unapt to perceive how the world is really going, as an ordinary young Englishman of our upper classes." ²⁾ And the Middle Classes, the *Philistines*, are no better.

With our religion of inequality — as Mr. Gladstone calls it — "we at present tend to have our higher class in general materialised, our middle-class vulgarised, and our lower class brutalised". ³⁾ Our middle classes ought to be able to assume rule; they cannot, because they have not the qualifications required. The difference between the three classes can only be lessened by means of general culture. The humanising of the whole body of the English nation interested Matthew Arnold. ⁴⁾ To reach this purpose, three things are above all necessary: *First*, a reduction of those immense inequalities of condition and property of which the English land-system is the base. *Second*, a genuine municipal system which offers to peasants and labourers the best training for administrative action. *Third*, public schools for the middle classes.

Matthew Arnold was not ignorant of the great opportunity of promoting culture which was offered to him by his position as a school inspector. ⁵⁾

¹⁾ Cult. and An.

²⁾ Cult. and An.

³⁾ Ecce, convertimus ad gentes.

⁴⁾ Cf. Irish Essays.

⁵⁾ Cf.: 1. Schools and Universities on the Cont. 2. Reports on Elementary Schools 1852—82. 3. A French Eton. 4. Higher Schools and Universities in Germany.

Indeed, the noblest duty of the school is to promote culture. And the only way of successfully fighting against anarchism is the education of the poor and the poorest. Education must become universal, and therefore it must be made compulsory.¹⁾ How much more advanced are things in Prussia! There, “education is not flourishing because it is compulsory, it is compulsory because it is flourishing . . . people there really prize instruction and culture, and prefer them to other things”.²⁾

And children must not be taught mechanically. In 1869 Arnold proposed to create a 3 s. grant on average attendance, to be paid if the inspector finds the school taught with *intelligence*. — Ideas must be multiplied, promptly connected, one thing must be illustrated by another.³⁾ And this can be done best by teaching poetry and letters in general.

“Good poetry does undoubtedly tend to form the soul and character.”⁴⁾

Careful attention must be bestowed on the compilation of *Readers*. We ought to do as the Germans who entrust people proficient in the respective branches of science with the control of school books.⁵⁾ If this duty of the educational authorities is neglected, the consequence will be that the pupil has, except his Bible, no literature, no *humanizing* instruction at all.⁶⁾

If the instruction given in elementary schools is to be *formative*, it may not have for its subjects the three Rs only. Arnold proposes Latin studied in a very simple way, based on the Vulgate.⁷⁾ He would like to see what the Germans call *Naturkunde* added as a class-subject to grammar, geography, and English history.⁸⁾

“In general, our school children, of from eight years of age to ten, should all be receiving instruction in these eight

1) Report 1853.

2) Rep. 1867.

3) Rep. 1874.

4) Rep. 1880.

5) Rep. 1867.

6) Rep. 1860.

7) Rep. 1874.

8) Rep. 1876.

matters, reading, writing, arithmetic, poetry, or poetic literature, grammar, geography, Naturkunde, music." (Rep. 1880.)

Matthew Arnold has often been reproached, and not without reason, that he was a theorist unable to understand the practical side of a problem. But in matters concerning education he showed an exceptional amount of common sense, and that too at the very beginning of his career as a school-inspector.

He proposes Infant Schools.¹⁾ He favours drill (Rep. 1872) and complains of the inefficient teaching of needlework (Rep. 1853). As early as 1858, in his Report on the Training College in the Borough Road, he agrees with the superiors who wish to give a more searching and practical character to the examination of female students in the details of domestic economy.

"The one word which I feel disposed at present, as an inspector of primary schools, to keep perpetually repeating, for my own benefit and for that of others, is this: *simplicity!*"²⁾

Only a thorough school-master can have written these words.

If the masters are to propagate culture, a sound general knowledge is required of them. Therefore Arnold encourages them to try the matriculation-examination at the London University which has extremely liberal conditions for admission. "Latin, French, and German are an excellent and by no means over-difficult study for our young school-masters." (Rep. 1874.)

Matthew Arnold has also proposed a new programme of educating the *Philistines*.³⁾ He admits that in England the upper class is very well taken care of, in the way of schools, but not the middle class. The nine Public Schools are by no means sufficient to provide for all the requirements of secondary education; and besides, they are too expensive. In England, the great mass of the middle class people demand a school charge like that of Toulouse or Sorèze.⁴⁾ — A radical change

¹⁾ Rep. 1853.

²⁾ Rep. 1878.

³⁾ Cf. A French Eton.

⁴⁾ In England, the fees amount from £ 120 to £ 200 per annum; at Toulouse the highest fee amounts to frs. 900.---

can only be brought about by state interference. We must have secondary instruction organised on a great and regular scale; it must be a national concern. "Education is and must be a matter of public establishment. — What should be had in view is to constitute, in every county, at least one great centre of secondary instruction, with low charges, with the security of inspection and with a public character. These institutions should bear some such titles as that of *Royal Schools*."

We can make State action our agent, not our master. It will then be "beneficence acting by rule". By accepting a State grant, the citizen "is no more humiliated than when he crosses London Bridge, or walks down the King's Road, or visits the British Museum".

The work must come from the middle class; it is the great reader, whereas the upper class have distinguished themselves lately by slackness and sleepiness of mind. A middle class thus raised to a higher and more genial culture would be a true ideal for the working classes to aim at.

The style and general tone of *Higher Schools and Universities in Germany* is not so fresh and captivating as that of *A French Eton*. In order to raise the standard of general instruction in England, Arnold proposes three means the beneficial effect of which he has witnessed on the Continent.

Firstly. If public schools, i. e. State schools, are a necessity, then a Minister of Education is a necessity. He alone supplies a centre on which to fix responsibility.

Secondly. A High Council of Education, such as exists in France and Italy ¹⁾ comprising without regard to politics the personages most proper to be heard on questions of public education.

Thirdly. The institution of Provincial School Boards supplying a basis for local action and preserving one from the inconveniences of an over-centralised system like that of France.

And last not least, Matthew Arnold pleads the necessity of rejuvenating that stately old matron, the English University. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge are *hauts lycées*; they are still, in fact, schools; they do not provide facilities

¹⁾ We may add, in some Swiss Cantons (Erziehungsrat). Sg.

for the young man to go on in the line where his special aptitudes lead him. The examination for the degree of bachelor of arts, which they place at the end of their three years' University course, is merely the *Abiturientenexamen* in Germany. But for mastership or doctorship, Oxford and Cambridge have either no examination at all, or an examination which is mere form. The crown of the edifice is wanting. And besides a real University, England ought to have special schools like the School of Arts and Trades in Paris, or the *Gewerbe-Institut* of Berlin, or the Zürich Polytechnicum.

No, Philistia is not the true promised land. We are living at a time when the *idea* is beginning to exercise a real power in human society.¹⁾ Arnold would be sorry to be a Frenchman, German, or American, or anything but an Englishman.²⁾ But he wishes his nation to look at things on the Continent and to learn something, especially from the French. How prompt they are in the practical application of an idea when they seize it! The reception of Mr. Renan, for instance, at the Academy is an event at least as important as the dinner and speechifying at the opening of the annual season for the Buckhounds.³⁾

And action may not be delayed. If England refuses to perceive how the world is going and must go, she must lose in all ways; she runs the danger of declining into a sort of greater Holland.⁴⁾

"Let us ourselves, all of us who are proud of being the ministers of these new ideas, work incessantly to procure for them a wider and more fruitful application."⁵⁾

Matthew Arnold spoke to the English in a new voice to which they had not been accustomed. There was a man who told them that it was absurd to glorify England as it had been done for ages past. And what was worse, he used no sugared words, but professed a certain tone of harsh and cynical antagonism. Like Arminius⁶⁾ he had a "Prussian way of turning

1) Cf. Essay on Heine.

2) Letter to his Mother, March 1866.

3) Cf. Ecce etc.

4) Cf. Letter to Miss Arnold, Nov. 1865.

5) Celtic Literature.

6) In *Friendship's Garland*.

up his nose at things and laying down the law about them". It was enough to make people feel uncomfortable. There they heard a gentleman speaking to them, and yet he had no manners. That was a thing unheard of. He minted a term for current use in the English language — the term *Philistine*, which, by the by, had already been used in *Sartor Resartus*.

And exactly these new terms irritated people to a high degree. They might pass for the Populace, or even for the Philistines. But *Barbarians* was too bad. It was of little use that the author of all this mischief declared that the term was by no means used in its common acceptation, that the Aristocracy were endowed with high qualities. Indeed, Matthew Arnold never professed to ignore the good qualities of the highest social order of his country.¹⁾ But it is to be regretted that he did not stick to the usual term *Aristocracy* which would have served his purpose just as well and would have procured him many more ready listeners.

And two other terms can hardly be called over-felicitous. That tendency in human nature which goes forth towards thought and contemplation, Arnold names *Hellenism*, that which tends to work and action he calls *Hebraism*. Hellenism is not very accurate, because the life of contemplation did hardly constitute the Greek ideal; there is a great practical tendency in the teaching of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

Let us put the principal question concerning this subject. Did all those deficiencies of the English character pointed out by Arnold really exist? It will be quite another question whether there are exaggerations in his statements. —

As to the middle-class there can be no doubt that fifty or thirty years ago there was too much of narrow-mindedness and self-sufficiency, in short too much Philistinism in England. The prejudices against the English still prevalent on the Continent, especially in Germany and France, can of course partly be traced back to envy rising from political and commercial rivalry. But even in our days the current continental prejudices against the Anglo-Saxon race are in a very high degree tra-

¹⁾ Cf. *An Elton Boy*. The Fortn. Rev., June 1882.

Schrag, Matthew Arnold.

ditional; they are reminiscences of by-gone days when Englishmen, after crossing the Channel, insisted on treating everybody as porters. Applied to the present English generation *en bloc*, these views are unfair and may be best styled as continental Philistinism.

To be sure, things used to be worse. Matthew Arnold had said a word in favour of the Decimal System. Hear what answer he got:

"To count by tens is an absurd anomaly, as any mathematician will admit, and twelve, with its four low divisions, is obviously the best possible radix for a system."¹⁾

This reminds us of a school inspector who tried hard to get the *twelve* commandments out of a class, and not seeing any chance of success, gave the job up in despair.

But the world is getting worse; for the *London Quarterly Review* June 1887 brought the following alarming passage:

... "if the vexations of our incommensurate money system, and our difficult and complex weights and measures could be done away with."

And it is just as much heresy to turn Old Euclid out of the schools, as it is actually being done in England.

Another instance of genuine Philistinism may be added.²⁾ Mr. Bazley, the member for Manchester, had made a speech in which he had said that during the last months there had been a cry that middle-class education ought to receive more attention. He did not think that class needed the sympathy either of the legislation or of the public. And the *Daily Telegraph* reported on this speech as follows:

"It was at once grand, genial, national, and distinct." And the *Morning Star*:

"He talked to his constituents as Manchester people like to be talked to, in the language of clear, manly intelligence, which penetrates through sophisms, ignores commonplaces, and gives to conventional illusions their true value."

Much to the same effect spoke Mr. Miall, another middle-class leader, in the *Nonconformist*:

¹⁾ The Brit. Quart. Rev., Oct. 1865.

²⁾ Cf. Friendship's Garland.

"Middle-class education seems to be a favourite topic of the hour, and we must confess to a feeling of shame at the nonsense which is being uttered on the subject."

The Edinburgh Review, July 1861, thought it injurious to the independence and self-respect of the community and onerous to the state that a school-master has to consider himself as a state *employé*.

"It is the proud distinction of this country that we conduct our affairs without the interference of the State."

Is it to be wondered at that Matthew Arnold, on waking up one morning, found all the sweetness he had been accumulating for years, clean gone?

Still, some important objections may be raised against many statements contained in Arnold's social criticism. He may have been right when he said that the Aristocracy were deteriorating; they did not cultivate their minds; they were no longer fond of reading. But he was not well informed when he called the eighteenth century the "flowering time of the English Aristocracy". The dramas, poems, novels, pictures, newspapers, diaries and private letters of the period tell us a different tale. — Arnold exaggerated when, referring to distinguished scholarships, he treated as an accurate statement the words of an undergraduate: "Oh, the men from the great schools don't care for those things now." Volume 10 of Macmillan's Magazine brought a list of creditable successes obtained by Eton boys at Oxford from 1862—64.

The English public of all shades objected to Matthew Arnold's proposals for State interference in matters of education. For this we may not judge them too severely. The thing was too much of a novelty in English administration. The Education Department, it seems, was the only public office which attempted a bureaucratic administration as it is common on the Continent. English administration had always left as many details as possible to local agents and authorities. There were, in 1865, fourteen senior officers, fifty clerks, and sixty inspectors, yet quite insufficient to discharge the heavy duties. The English were so adverse to State action because their experience had shown them more of the State-Inaction in such cases.

Matthew Arnold showed little historic sense when he simply proposed the Franco-Prussian system. In reforms of such vital importance it is simply impossible to ignore national differences and habits of long growth. He ought to have tried to graft new ideas on old ones. But in all his proposals, he was too sanguine. — Moreover, Arnold's dealing with the world and his adversaries gives us an evident proof that if sweetness and light are the infallible outgrowths of culture, yet fire and strength are indispensable to any person who has to fight for the realisation of an ideal.

In spite of all these restrictions it cannot be denied that Matthew Arnold, as a social teacher, has done a great deal of good. This has been recognised by many of his countrymen who could forgive him his mistakes and who looked at the bottom of things.

Mr. Alfred Austin wrote ¹⁾ about *Culture and Anarchy*:

"It is a delightful volume, and makes much notable folly look more foolish than ever."

One might think that Matthew Arnold put himself into a position of almost cynical antagonism to what he calls "machinery". But at bottom he did not object to it, as no reasonable man can. Only, he thought "machinery" had been praised quite enough.

Mr. Armstrong ²⁾ hit the right thing: "This seems to me the deepest, truest, and most needed of all the lessons Matthew Arnold has to teach us. Industrialism, politics, ecclesiasticism; which of us has not confused the machinery with the end?"

"But it was as an educationist that a large section of the public insisted on regarding him." ³⁾ The majority of the nation looked on Arnold as an authority in educational matters, whose opinions were, at least, entitled to a respectful hearing. But also in this case people thought he was "putting on such airs". ⁴⁾ — Still, various men could not deny that the Report of 1868, in which Arnold gives a sketch of the French, Italian,

¹⁾ The Cont. R., Dec. 1881.

²⁾ Latter-Day Teachers.

³⁾ Fitch.

⁴⁾ The Athenaeum, April 4, 1868.

russian and Swiss systems of education, ought to do good service. In 1864 ¹⁾ the *Athenaeum* had already frankly admitted that the great public schools were no longer adequate to the task of educating the boys of the nation, that they were “but the schools of a section of the public”. The reviewer felt sure that the demand for superior education was increasing and would produce schools, and that, at such a juncture, Matthew Arnold’s opinions were certain to influence public men.

Another voice from the public may be quoted:

“No unprejudiced man will rise from the perusal of his reports ²⁾ without a saddening conviction — a conviction possibly deepened by personal experience — that the intellectual training afforded to boys in France and Germany is far more rich and valuable than that enjoyed by the great majority of English boys.” ³⁾

But hope was to be deferred. In 1879 people could read the following passage: “Mr. Arnold has been preaching for 30 years, and we have not listened to him.” ⁴⁾ Of what nature were the objections raised against his proposals? It was doubted whether the middle class were unhappy; whether they were more vulgar than in France, and whether inequality was caused by the defective schools.

It is certain that by improving school education we may add to the happiness of the middle and lower classes and that it is a Christian duty to do this. It would also be useless to deny that defective schools for the middle and lower classes actually foster inequality. As to all Matthew Arnold’s eulogies of what he had seen on the Continent, they were exaggerated, and this for one capital reason.

It is highly creditable to the educational authorities in England that occasionally they send commissioners to the Continent to enquire into various questions concerning education. But all such information brought home is incomplete because the commissioners visit the best schools in the most advanced

¹⁾ July 30th.

²⁾ Schools and Un. on the Cont.

³⁾ F. W. Farrar, *Fortn. Rev.*, June 1868.

⁴⁾ *The Brit. Quarterly Rev.*, Jan. 1879

towns only whereas they ought to make a point of seeing what is done in the simplest village school as well. Besides, the commissioners ought not to be obliged to rush through a foreign country as if they were "doing Europe" *à l'américaine*.

Matthew Arnold saw the bright face of the continent only. No doubt, the English could learn many good things from the French *Lycées* and the German *Gymnasien* and *Realschulen*.

It is true, he was not altogether blind to the shortcomings of the Toulouse Lyceum and the Sorèze School. But he does not seem to have noticed that those *lycées* keep up, from the second empire, far too much of the military spirit. It is quite true that in these establishments the habit of self-dependence and self-control is too little cultivated.¹⁾ These schools perform more or less the duties of pin-factories producing every year a certain number of objects looking much alike.

In a remarkable criticism ²⁾ on his Report on Continental Education, Matthew Arnold could read some disagreeable things. He had pleaded the superiority of continental schools over the English ones in many details of method, and it seems as if the methods for which he reproved the English teachers had been exploded long ago in England.

"He has not kept himself abreast of the progress made of late years in the theory and practice of education in this country."

As an inspector he directed his attention not to the methods, but to the results, and he did not study questions referring to method and pedagogy. Books of pedagogy bored him. He was not quite sure whether scientific pedagogy did much good to the teacher.

"The worst of such doctrines is that everything depends upon the practical application given to them, and it seems so easy to give a practical application which is erroneous."³⁾

But Arnold never pretended to be an oracle in methods of instruction. We do not think this was a great deficiency in him as a school inspector; he could be of higher service to

¹⁾ Cf. The Brit. Quart. R., Jan. 1879.

²⁾ The London Quart. R., Jan. 1887.

³⁾ Rep. 1878.

the schools by considering vital questions of a general character. For instance, he maintained that the instruction in English schools was not *formative*, by which he meant it did not aim at a harmonious development of all the faculties. And to understand what *formative* means is of higher importance to a reformer than an intimate acquaintance with all the details of method. But the London Quarterly Review knew things better; yes, Mr. Arnold, our instruction *is* formative! "Mr. Arnold has not had any occasion to draw forth the religious (!) knowledge of our best elementary schools."

There is one point we sorely miss in Matthew Arnold's educational work. There can be no doubt that when he wished "English children" to enjoy the benefits of a formative instruction he did not except Public School boys. On many occasions the apostle of culture directly and indirectly admitted what a blessing his knowledge of French had been to him. He was not averse to the classical training; but like his father he wished it to be done more rationally and less exclusively. Why then did he not urge on his countrymen the necessity of thoroughly teaching French and German in the Preparatory Schools and the great Public Schools? To be sure, the English will gradually get to understand that without a fair knowledge of French and German their education is incomplete, for an educated person of our time must know French, German and English, these languages being the main channels through which culture can be obtained. But then the modern languages may not be treated as a sort of appendix to the school-work only, and they must be taught rationally and consequently by persons who are able to do it. It is by no means sufficient to engage a foreigner for this work, for not every foreigner is able to teach. Every effort ought to be made that a few years hence the sketch of the German Master in F. Anstey's *Vice Versa* should lose all character of actuality.

"But we have no taste for modern languages; we can never learn to pronounce them properly." — I say, boys and girls in England acquire the French pronunciation at least as well as those in Germany. And in giving more room to the teaching of modern languages, the English need not accept all the extreme theories as lately formulated on the Continent.

Let them listen to the capital advice of their countryman, Mr. Sweet.¹⁾

There is, at present, a strong tendency in England to remodel the teaching in the schools as regards the subjects and methods. It may fairly be expected that, as time goes on, many of Matthew Arnold's proposals will be realised. Even if his books were no longer referred to, the new progressive movement is undoubtedly in a high degree a product of his suggestive ideas.

"Culture differs considerably from religion. Its Code is not the Bible only."²⁾ But Matthew Arnold always felt that Religion represents a very important factor of Culture. He was an eminently fine literary critic. Now, there is a science akin to that of literature, and its method comes very near literary criticism: — the criticism of the Scriptures. It is, therefore, not surprising that Arnold felt a strong bent towards the study of the Bible, the less surprising as the subject-matter of it is so closely connected with social life in England.

Professor *Huxley* has treated the same subject as Matthew Arnold, but from the point of view of an absolute scientist.

Huxley sets out from the word *evolution*. Taken in its popular signification, this word means progressive development, that is, gradual change from a condition of relative uniformity to one of relative complexity. Evolution excludes creation and all other kinds of supernatural intervention. Man, physical, intellectual and moral, is part and parcel of nature.³⁾

"The actuality of the spiritual world lies as much within the province of science, as any other question about the existence and powers of the varied forms of living and conscious activity."⁴⁾

1. Cf. *The Practical Study of Languages. A Guide for Teachers and Learners.* London 1899.

2) *Cult and Art.*

3) Cf. *Evolution and Ethics.*

4) *Science and Christian Tradition.*

Huxley wished to do something towards the preparation of those who have ceased to be contented with the old creeds and find no satisfaction in half-measures. The demonology of primitive Christianity is totally devoid of foundation. Supernaturalism has to cope with an enemy. This enemy is science. Scientific historical criticism has reduced the annals of heroic Greece and of regal Rome to the level of fables. The unity of authorship of the *Iliad* was successfully assailed by scientific literary criticism. The Hexateuch and the Gospels have been as severely tested.¹⁾ In all our avocations we must admit that intelligent work is the only acceptable worship; and that, whether there be a Supernature or not, our business is with Nature.

The question as to what Jesus Christ really said and did is strictly a scientific problem, which is capable of solution by no other methods than those practised by the historian and the literary critic.

So far the great *Agnostic*. Matthew Arnold, too, has been called an Agnostic.

"Agnosticism is not a creed, but a method, the essence of which lies in the rigorous application of a single principle : Try all things, hold fast by that which is good. -- In matters of the intellect, follow your reason as far as it will take you, without regard to any other consideration.²⁾"

Matthew Arnold, like Huxley, did not believe in miracles. "*For miracles do not happen.*" The author of "Last Essays on Church and Religion" repeats what he had often said before. He feels confident that in religion, too, the barriers of tradition will finally give way and that a common European level of thought will establish itself in England. "England does not desire criticism. But it is our duty to change the English ideas, by saying, imperturbably, what we think."³⁾

But now Arnold takes a course which differs much from that of Huxley. He had utilised the results of modern Biblical

1) Cf. The concise and clear critical review of the Gospels XVIII—XXXI based on the works of Renan, Baur, Strauss, Reuss, Volkmann.

2) *Huxley*, Science and Chr. Trad.

3) Letter to his Mother, May 1863.

criticism, and yet he suddenly complains of the negative work done by the Critics. They pull down the old edifice and do not give us anything in its place.

“Rejecting, henceforth, all concern with the absolute religion of tradition, the liberalism of the Continent rejects also, and on the like grounds, all concern with the Bible and Christianity.” ¹⁾

Culture might offer an equivalent for what we are going to lose; but the majority of men is not yet ripe for such a radical change. There are people who still cling to the Bible and who yet can believe in miracles no longer. The thing is to recast religion. In order to do this, we must try to discover the real meaning of the Scriptures. Our effort will be a critical one; we must endeavour to see things as they really are. — “If we only can dissolve what is bad without dissolving what is good.” ²⁾

Matthew Arnold gives a short *résumé* of those results of negative Biblical criticism which are just necessary to show that the traditional dogmas have lost all actual value, that all the creeds will go.

Arnold's newly proposed Bible criticism is dominated by one leading idea: That the Bible must be judged like any other book of literature. For this purpose, philology alone is not sufficient. We want a very wide experience from comparative observation in many directions. If we look close at the Scriptures we shall find that all Israel's language about the infinitely magnified man is approximate language — the language of poetry. We must understand that the language of the Bible is fluid, passing and literary, not rigid, fixed and scientific.

“The Bible is only Hebrew poetry plainly translated into harmonious prose. At least, the great part of it is only this.” ³⁾ To understand this, flexibility is wanted, and this flexibility is *Culture*.

If we want to understand the Bible, we must be clear as to the object of religion. This object is *conduct*. *Conduct* is

¹⁾ Literature and Dogma.

²⁾ Letter to Lady de Rothschild, Aug. 1868.

³⁾ Letter to Grant Duff, M. P., Sept. 1868.

three-fourths of our life. It is all-important. For instance, the French will have to suffer for their want of conduct. France must recover through a powerful and profound renewal, a great inward change brought about by the "remnant" amongst her people.¹⁾

"Whatever may be said of the harshness of such a sentence, it is yet true that her fall is mainly due to that want of serious conception of righteousness and the need of it."²⁾

And taking into consideration the most current of modern doctrines: The instinct of self-preservation and the reproductive instinct are again matters of conduct. Further, conduct and morality are the same. Finally, between morality and religion there is only a difference of degree: "*Religion is morality touched with emotion.*"³⁾

We must keep the Bible, exactly because it gives us a rule of conduct and it is, externally at least, well known. It still is, at the present moment, a popular book. Matthew Arnold is of the same opinion as Coleridge: "I have found words (in the Bible) for my inmost thoughts, songs for my joy, utterances for my hidden griefs, and pleadings for my shame and my feebleness."⁴⁾

"The Bible is the only book well enough known to quote as the Greeks quoted Homer, sure that the quotation would go home to every reader, and it is quite astonishing how a Bible sentence clinches and sums up an argument."⁵⁾

What rule of conduct does the Bible give us? The application of a rule of conduct is made by fixing our thoughts upon the matter, by having it perpetually in our mind. No people ever felt the importance of conduct so strongly as the Hebrew people. God they called the *Eternal*. Good conduct is for righteousness. The very great part in righteousness belongs to *not-ourselves*, and this power not ourselves which makes for righteousness, the Hebrew people began to adore. This secret power which makes for righteousness cannot be fully grasped;

¹⁾ Cf. American Discourses.

²⁾ Letter to his Mother, Jan. 1871.

³⁾ Cf. Literature and Dogma, A Speech at Eton, and Irish Essays.

⁴⁾ Confessions, Letter I.

⁵⁾ Letter to his Mother, March 1862.

therefore, the language of poetry expresses it better than the language of science. And this should be so. We must have an extra-belief, an *Aberglaube* in Goethe's sense, i. e. a belief in things not wholly tangible. It is that which we hope, augur, imagine; this is the poetry of life, and has the rights of poetry. But it is not science.

This idea of righteousness was taken up and transformed by Jesus. "The New Testament tells us how righteousness is composed."¹⁾ Jesus brought a *method*: repentance, and he brought a *secret*: *peace*. He set up a great unceasing inward movement of attention and verification in matters which are three-fourths of human life; and so Jesus brought the idea of two lives. But this we can only see through the Bible.

It was the current of righteousness which set St. Paul in motion. He too recommended the *epieikeia* — sweet reasonableness — and dwelt on the *solidarity* of mankind. St. Paul was conscious of the mighty world outside man, and the weak world inside him, and he found a point in which these two seemed to combine for man's salvation. To this new and potent influence Paul gave the name of *faith*, "faith that worketh through love." It is fidelity, *a power of holding fast to an unseen power of goodness through identification of Christ.*"

There was in all his sayings an under-current of thought. Death, for him, is living after the flesh, obedience to sin; life is mortifying by the spirit the deeds of the flesh, obedience to righteousness. Resurrection, therefore, is the rising from death in this sense to life in this sense.²⁾

The prophecies of the Old Testament cannot stand as they are in the Scriptures, they prophecied the reign of the Eternal not-ourselves which makes for righteousness.

Christianity is an improvement on the lessons of the Old Testament; we must keep it because it gives us the best rule of conduct.

"Men are not mistaken in thinking that Christianity has done them good, in loving it... Christianity is truly the greatest and happiest stroke ever yet made for human per-

¹⁾ American Discourses.

²⁾ Cf. St. Paul and Protestantism.

fection. I believe that Christianity will survive because of its natural truth.”¹⁾

And now for action! We must bring about the triumph of a new and high conception of the Christian ideal freed from all superstition. We possess a means of effectually doing this: the Church. Matthew Arnold had preserved his father’s enthusiasm for the Church.

“The Church of our country is to be considered as a national Christian society for the promotion of goodness, to which a man cannot but wish well, and in which he might rejoice to minister.”²⁾ *Contra ecclesiam nemo pacificus*. Because the Church is there; because strife, jealousy, and self-assertion are sure to come with breaking off from her. A Christian is inexcusable in breaking with the Church. For this reason Arnold upbraids narrow-minded Dissenters and High-Churchmen alike,³⁾ thus taking up his father’s work.

If Matthew Arnold was, on the whole, unsuccessful as a religious teacher, it was chiefly the fault of the work itself. The principal books in question — *Literature and Dogma*, *God and the Bible* — are, in fact, nothing but pamphlets. These pages read like a series of lectures. The author endeavours to be very plain, and intelligible to any reader. He therefore repeatedly insists on the main points of his argument and consequently gets exceedingly tiresome.

Besides, there is a weak point in the very essence of his arguments: The language of the Bible is the language of poetry; in other words: we cannot get at the exact original meaning of it. We have, therefore, a right to explain it in a rational way, independent from traditional views.

Quite so. But everybody has the same right; and it follows that everybody can give the Bible text an interpretation of his own.

“He cannot pick and choose and say that this is poetry, because he does not think its drift can be “verified”; and that that, on the other hand, is prose, because he has persuaded

¹⁾ *God and the Bible*.

²⁾ *Last Essays*.

³⁾ Cf. *On Modern Dissent*.

himself that he has "verified" it. — It seems quite impossible to say where the poetry of the Bible ends and its serious meaning begins. —

It is not criticism at all, it is playing fast — and loose with the language in the most ridiculous manner! ¹⁾

It will be instructive to hear what the various parties said to Arnold's new teaching.

First of all, there are the believers in tradition, like Gladstone who not even for the sake of reflection admit that miracles might possibly not have happened. To this group we may also reckon many who are convinced of the necessity of rigorous Bible criticism, but yet stick fast to their belief in a personal God. "It is, in short, that very faith in a personal God, which Matthew Arnold ridicules, which alone sustains the idea of righteousness, and makes it a passion to any poor, weak, human soul." ²⁾ It is evident that Arnold can never be popular with this positive group.

In the second place, there are the scientists like Huxley who put the Bible and Religion to the severest test possible, bringing to their studies a consummate sense of logic. These men cannot agree with Arnold either.

The theological world in general greeted the announcements of Matthew Arnold with a mocking laugh.

"A valuable contribution ³⁾ to the formation of a Rosa-Matilda School of theology, prefaced by an exhortation to the Dissenters to submit with a sweet reasonableness to the pretensions of the Anglican sect. Theological rose-pink would have a better chance if there were less science in the air, for one thing, and if Mr. Arnold could, for another, blot out from men's minds all that half of New Testament teaching which is dead against rose-pink." ⁴⁾

"Here in England that book (Literature and Dogma) passes, in general, for a book revolutionary and anti-religious." ⁵⁾ For anybody, who read those books carefully, there could be

¹⁾ R. H. Hutton, *Mr. Arnold's Sublimated Bible*, 1874.

²⁾ *John Tulloch*, *The Modern Religion of Experience*.

³⁾ *St. Paul and Protestantism*.

⁴⁾ *The Forstn. Rev.*, June 1870.

⁵⁾ *Last Essays*.

no mistaking that its author was a Radical and a Free-thinker — in spite of the violent assault directed against Bishop Colenso. But the light-handed treatment won attention.

“Je ne poursuis que de loin et par des voies purement littéraires une réforme religieuse que vous abordez plus franchement.”¹⁾

“However much I may be attacked, my manner of writing is certainly one that takes hold of the people and proves effective.”²⁾

In the world of theological discussion, a great change had taken place.

“Our most notable religious teachers are no longer men who have spent their days and nights in the study of Holy Scripture, but *literary* men with no function for *dogma* and who despise it accordingly.”³⁾ And J. Tulloch spoke in the same tone: “The fact is that theology now-a-days is considered to be an open pasture-ground on which all literary adventurers may disport themselves.” — As a matter of course, the majority of theologians felt inclined to treat as an adventurer anybody who tried to penetrate into the sanctuary of their science, not thinking that through such a change theology and religion might gain more than lose.

Wordsworth, Emerson, Goethe, Heine and Hegel had brought the dream of the world-spirit ever developing itself. Theologians, too, began to give a literary turn to their writings, above all the members of the Dutch School — *De Modernen*. The leaders of this School are Dr. Hooykaas and Van Hamel.⁴⁾ The scope of their work consists in rescuing religion from metaphysics and planting it on the basis of moral experience. For them, as well as for Matthew Arnold, Supernaturalism is not religion.

It has been one of Matthew Arnold's principal efforts to prove the futility of *Dogmas*. Let us assume that at this present time dogmas have no value whatever. Even in such a case

¹⁾ Letter to M. Fontanès, Sept. 20, 1872.

²⁾ Letter to his Mother, Feb. 27, 1869.

³⁾ Blackwood's Mag., June 1873.

⁴⁾ Cf. Theologisch Tijdschrift, 1874—5—6.

the dogmas of past ages ought to be treated with deference; for then we should have to treat them as objects belonging to history, and taken as such only they are of high interest; for dogmas are men's highest thoughts about religion.¹⁾

But this eminent impartiality of the historian Arnold did not possess. The Bishops, especially those of Winchester and Gloucester, had spoken in favour of dogma, as was their traditional duty to do. How great was their surprise when one fine morning they felt themselves attacked in the most violent manner designed as pleasantry.²⁾ This might have been done in a special pamphlet. But to mix up these flippant personalities with an essay towards a better appreciation of the Bible was, at least, bad literary taste. Arnold soon afterwards met the Bishops in society.

"And there I stood for a long time talking to my two bishops, to the amusement of some people in the room, which was very full"³⁾

Dogma is the theory, conduct the practice of Religion. When Arnold talks about the Eternal not-ourselves etc., he cannot get rid of Dogma himself. He was himself a dogmatist. So it would have been advisable for him to plead that dogmas are changeable, as Carlyle had done.

In just as harsh a tone Arnold speaks to the Dissenters.⁴⁾ More logical it would have been for a free-thinker to see, with Mr. Leslie Stephan,⁵⁾ that the evils of Dissent are mainly due to the fact that the Church was, like so many other English institutions, the relic of an exploded order of things, and could by no means survive those ideas from which it once derived its vitality.

But Matthew Arnold sorely wanted one of his father's most admirable qualities: logic. He had a great deal of common sense,⁶⁾ but logic, very little. How many a passage could be

1) "Décrier le passé et ses devanciers, c'est décrier l'histoire de la science que l'on cultive, c'est décrier soi-même et ses propres travaux." *Victor Cousin*, *Hist. de la phil.*, vol. I, 129.

2) In *Lit. and Dogma*.

3) Letter to his Mother, Feb. 27, 1869.

4) In *St. Paul*.

5) *Fraser's Mag.*, Oct. 1870.

6) Cf. His work in the Elementary Schools.

pointed out in his theological essays, where science is wronged! Very often "serious questions are arbitrarily dismissed, or discussed by canons taken at haphazard as the argument proceeds." ¹⁾ For instance, what scientific or common-sense proof can Matthew Arnold give for a statement like the following: — "There is not a particle of metaphysics in the Hebrew use of the name of God." ²⁾ Arnold read his own ideas into the Bible.

It is too flattering for the ancient Hebrews to think that they could worship an *abstractum*. Read passages like — "Jehovah is my shepherd etc." — and you will be convinced that to the mind of the Hebrew Psalmist and prophet, the idea of God was no mere poetical imagination. And the way in which Jesus talks of his Father makes us believe that from the beginning Fatherhood was the centre of the Christian idea.

And most curious! Arnold esteemed the fourth Gospel as by far the most valuable source for learning what Jesus was, whereas the fourth Gospel is not only unhistorical, but betrays a set theological and ecclesiastical purpose.

Another strange thing. Arnold says of the masses: "They require plain experimental proof (of the existence of God), such as that fire burns them if they touch it." He was unable to give such a proof; for to say that there undeniably exists a "Power not-ourselves that makes for righteousness" is the least successful way of convincing the masses.

But not only Matthew Arnold's definition of the Divine Power, but also his method of proving the justness of it by means of the Bible is open to criticism.

"The mass of the people take from the Bible what suits them and quietly leave on one side all that does not." ³⁾ Arnold follows their example. He applies to the Bible his otherwise excellent method of acquiring culture: It is defined in a remark on education.

"*Da mihi, Domine, scire quod sciendum est*, the spirit of that prayer ought to rule our education. The most important part in our scheme of education are what we call the *points*

¹⁾ The Academy, Aug. 1870.

²⁾ Lit. and Dogma.

³⁾ Letter to his Mother, April 1863.

de repère."¹⁾ And such *points de repère* Arnold collected in his Jsaiah, a Bible Reading for Schools, — and in the Six Chief Lives from Johnson's Lives of the Poets.

"Whether the people get hold of a single thing in high literature, this point of education is of immense matter."²⁾

In dealing with the Bible, Arnold now simply takes the passages which suit his purpose. M. W. Reid, an American gentleman endowed with a powerful romantic imagination, has given us a lively sketch of this method:

"As men cross the plains, we march through the Bible, all of it; but we camp only where there is wood, and water, and grass, in a place also, that we can hold against Indians. With a tent pitched in the 23^d Psalm, or in its neighborhood, will we not fear, though "the Songs of Solomon" are seized, and sung by the enemy."

Matthew Arnold's theological essays have also been treated on philosophical grounds. The most notable criticism in this direction is that by J. Martineau.³⁾ Let us hear what this famous liberal-minded theologian says:

"No metaphysics!" is the cry to-day, which means, "No inquiry into any *Real Being* beyond the phenomena of the world." — All agree that morality is most akin to religion and must take its place. But morality is temporal, not spiritual. Shall it be *ideal*? — "Collective humanity?" Or shall we fix our eye on "the stream of tendency that makes for righteousness"? J. Martineau rejects moral idealism as not being sufficient to take the place of religion.

Our will often fails. This conflict between character and conception is doubtless the cradle of religion: the interval between what we are and what we are guilty for not being, is that which turns our look upwards, to see if there be hope beyond these shadows of reproach.

We must believe in a *Living God*.⁴⁾ Reverence for character above us, at whatever height it may be, is the posture of a

1) Lives of Johnson.

2) Letter to Mr. Fitch.

3) Ideal Substitutes for God, 1878.

4) Mind, M. does not say, "in a *personal* God".

religious nature. The inward homage, whatever its direction, shall alight upon a *real object*. Here it is that Moral Idealism falls short of the conditions of Religion: it is known to be only in our heads, while the ideal of Religion must be also real; and this is the case when we affirm that over us and in relation to us the All-perfect Mind *exists*. — Devout faith is a belief of *real Being* on the strength of *what ought to be*. If we name it from the interior, it is the revelation of God in the conscience. In my inward struggle the *real* self is always that which votes for the good. The ideal self is the only *Real*. But it is also unreal, for it is never realized. The moralists like Matthew Arnold lose sight of the real character of religion ¹⁾ because they forget how it finds men. It indeed *comes to them* as a living awe, a conscious presence, haunting them.²⁾ Can it really be replaced by a law of conduct to which men must conform?

We must here take notice of a most remarkable book which answers the purpose of J. Martineau as well as that of Matthew Arnold. This fascinating work is entitled *Natural Religion*. It was first published anonymously; its author is Prof. Seeley at Cambridge, who also wrote a Life of Jesus, *Ecce homo* (1865).

For his purpose the author thinks it is important to distinguish between the God in whom ordinary people believe and a God of another character in whom they might conceivably believe in time to come; that man believes in a God, who feels himself in the presence of a Power which is not himself and is immeasurably above himself. Worship implies admiration, and something which may be called love. Now, a very genuine love is felt by the contemplator of Nature. He also has the feeling of personal connection with Nature.

Admiration expresses itself in poetry. Nature is a sublime object of poetry. On Goethe and Wordsworth the admiration of Nature had the same purifying influence as ordinary religion has on ordinary people. Our age, which is called atheistic, shows in all its imaginative literature a religiousness, a sense

¹⁾ *Religion* is here taken in the broadest meaning of the term, not as one special form.

²⁾ Cf.: *Carran*, Etudes sur la théorie de l'évolution.

of the Divine which was wanting in the more orthodox ages. The modern views of God, so far as they go, have a reality, a freshness that the others wanted. We deny that the essential part of all religion is morality. Something more is wanted: *Culture*. The substance of religion is culture and the fruit of it the higher life.

The Bible is an eminently practical book. It is dedicated to the worship of man. It gives an antithesis of letter and spirit, law and grace, works and faith. It is the unique Epic of Human Action.

Religion is the atmosphere of common thought and feeling which surrounds a community. Thus we are led to the Church of Natural Religion. The body wants a soul, the State wants a Church, else it will be a mere machine. This Church exists already, a vast communion of all who are inspired by the culture and civilisation of the age. But it is as yet unconscious of its new duties. Other times, other churches. The Christian Church is now weak, because, instead of looking forward to its new aims, it looks back to its beginnings.

If we look back on Matthew Arnold's religious theories, their principal defect is not difficult to discover. As he himself expressed it, there will come a time when a high stage of Culture, one common European level of thought will render it unnecessary to base all the moral principles on the Bible. Arnold wishes to supply a Bible for the period of transition. But such a moral code is unnecessary. Through doubt a man arrives at conviction; but as long as he doubts, no sublimated Bible can be of help to him; and if he cannot entirely disengage himself from the Bible, his position towards the Scriptures will always be individual. Every man will then like to take from the Bible what *he* likes. And the new faith once attained, the Bible will be regarded as one factor only among many which constitute Culture in the sense of Arnold and the author of *Natural Religion*.

It was also a most unpractical move to put in the place of a personal God the idea of righteousness, of the Eternal not-ourselves. This idea is too hopelessly abstract.

Matthew Arnold's effort has been in the direction of **ethics**. He pointed out the existence of a moral order in the universe.

So, if compared with Spencer and Huxley, Arnold's ethical theory is of a higher stage: it appears as an *ethical idealism* akin to that of Fichte.

Thus, in spite of all their weak points, Arnold's lessons secure him a prominent place among moralists. In this work, too, he gives many proofs of his exquisite literary taste. In *Literature and Dogma* we find the fundamental doctrine of Jesus concentrated in a few striking sentences which are admirably chosen.

The leading theologians of the day, even those of a comparatively orthodox stamp, took him seriously. Mr. John Tulloch wrote:

"It is a good thing that such men should turn their minds towards religion," — in opposition to men like Huxley who had said: "Why trouble ourselves about matters of which, however important they may be, we do know nothing, and can know nothing." ¹⁾

Yea, it was at last gratefully admitted that Arnold brought a strong lay mind to the study of questions which had been too much confined to professional theologians.

"It is not too much to say that he has done more to spread right ideas of what the Bible is, and how it should be read, than any other modern author." ²⁾

"We are grateful for all the quickening ideas, all the happy phrases, with which he has provoked the slow-moving mind of our country; we rejoice that each barb of thought has pierced and rankled." ³⁾

Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning are three poets great by the glow of the central fire. Shelley, Clough and Matthew Arnold differ from these, because they prevailingly represent the spirit of criticism. Among the latter three, Matthew Arnold is the critic *par excellence*, not only in social and theological

¹⁾ Lay Sermons, p. 150.

²⁾ The Theological Rev., Jan. 1878.

³⁾ D. Dowden, in The Fortn. Rev., June 1887.

questions, but especially in literary matters.¹⁾ Literature was the theme he knew best, and his *Essays in Criticism*²⁾ form part of those prose-writings which have gained for him the greatest and most enduring reputation.

No man can be a good critic of modern literature who is not thoroughly acquainted with at least one modern literature besides his own.

Matthew Arnold had a perfect familiarity with French literature, and he was an enthusiastic admirer of Sainte-Beuve and his new method of literary criticism.

Mme. de Staël and Chateaubriand laid the basis for a new codex of literary criticism. Their ideal of the beautiful in poetry can change according to time and circumstances. A work cannot be judged apart from manners, laws, and religion.

These ideas have been further developed by Villemain, Sainte-Beuve, Renan and Taine. These critics effected the triumph of the individual in literary criticism. Two principal questions must henceforth be asked with regard to the author: *First*: Who was he? Which was his *milieu*? *Second*: For what are we indebted to him?

The physical constitution of the author, his memoirs and letters, his judgment of contemporaries will be indispensable as soon as they help us to answer those questions.

Victor Cousin, in his "Introduction à l'histoire de la philosophie", assigns the place of honour to the study of the geographical *milieu*. If he knows the geography of a country, he will tell us what part this country has played in history. The application of this principle was made in a beautiful manner by Michelet, especially in the second volume of his *Histoire de France*.

Ever since 1825, Sainte-Beuve was consciously working after the new method. In 1831, by his article on Diderot, he

¹⁾ We may give here a list of remarkable Englishmen who were at the same time poets and critics:

Milton, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron and Mrs. Browning in the first rank;

Sidney, Cowly, Prior, Young, Goldsmith, Cowper, Coleridge, Landor, and Scott, in the second rank.

²⁾ First Series 1865. Second Series 1888.

introduced the *portrait* into literary criticism, viz. the physiology and anatomy of the poet, his native country, family, wife, his manner of living, his opinions on love, religion, death. In this way anatomy, physiology and moral science have become new and powerful aids to literary criticism.

By these proceedings the French critics endeavoured to raise criticism to the same level with science. The more rapidly science advanced, the more it became evident that the hope of discovering first causes and final aims must be given up and that the true field of scientific operation lies between the two. — In preparing his monumental work on *Port Royal*, Sainte-Beuve was led to the discovery that there exist spiritual families in the psychological parts of nature. This theory of the “natural history of minds” he established in the *Causeries du lundi*.

By means of this method it was possible to explain the works, but not to judge them. Works, however, must be classified, and this necessitates comparison and judgment. In giving a criticism on any work of art we shall never be able to dispense with aesthetics. The new method was, therefore, hardly able to eclipse the old one completely. Its special and undeniable merit lies in having rendered it more varied, more complete and picturesque. This will be keenly felt in comparing Taine's essay on Milton with the pages written on the same poet by Johnson and Macaulay. The French critic shows us a man with all his dominant qualities, which he inherited or which were the result of his *milieu*. And all these qualities we find again reflected in the work of the poet.

Before examining the work of the nineteenth century critics in England let us make a few remarks on Dr. Johnson whom Matthew Arnold calls “the greatest power in English letters during the eighteenth century”. Johnson gives as accurate an account as possible of a poet's life. Now, biography is the main factor of modern criticism. Johnson is often induced to mention the circumstances that led to the composition of the work he is going to criticise. What he thus performs in the way of modern criticism is only done accidentally, never consciously.

In the nineteenth century Carlyle, as a literary critic, holds a place between Johnson and Sainte-Beuve. Carlyle is fully

conscious of the importance of biography and he does establish the relations between the author, his time and his work. This was quite in keeping with his hero-worship.

"Our inquiry naturally divides itself into two departments, the Biographical and the Critical." ¹⁾

"It is Biography that first gives us both Poet and Poem; by the significance of the one elucidating and completing that of the other. — Conducted on such principles, the Biography of great men, especially of great Poets, that is, of men in the highest degree noble-minded and wise, might become one of the most dignified and valuable species of composition." ²⁾

It is clear that in this Carlyle had taken a decisive step; but the last stroke was still wanting. His essay on Novalis ³⁾ is a sufficient proof of this. Hear his remarks on the *Hymns to the Night*.

"The *Hymns to the Night*, it will be remembered, were written shortly after the death of his mistress: in that period of deep sorrow, or rather of holy deliverance from sorrow." Then the critic gives a comment from an exclusively literary point of view.

Haym, in his standard work on the German Romantic School,⁴⁾ writes on the same subject:

"The tender flower has now been wafted over into the other world." The poet is the same man as before, and yet another. "This earth I loved so much; with joy I was looking forward to the tender scenes awaiting me." — He felt like a man who had never heard of God before and now gets acquainted with the idea of Him. "If hitherto I have lived in the presence and hope of worldly happiness, henceforth I shall have to live entirely in the real future and in the faith in God and Immortality. I shall find it hard to tear myself away from the world altogether." — After the death of his brother, Novalis went to

¹⁾ Jean Paul, *Foreign Rev.*, No. 9, 1830.

²⁾ *Ibid.*

³⁾ *Foreign Rev.*, No. 7, 1829.

⁴⁾ *Die romantische Schule*. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Geistes. Berlin 1870.

There is no room here to quote the passage *in extenso*; so we only give the leading thoughts.

Tennstädt to be near the grave of the woman he had loved. To him this grave was the centre of the universe. From the 10th of April to the beginning of July he kept a diary. His intercourse with his departed lady assumed the form of dreams coloured with philosophy. His yearning shall bring him death. Thereby mankind shall be convinced of such a love, of faith which lasts until death. And he reproached himself for not continually keeping this thought before him.

As a poet, Novalis really carried out that mystical resolution of self-annihilation. He composed the Hymns to the Night, those thoughtful melancholy sounds of wailing rapture and devout grief. That reached far down into the unutterable depths of feeling."

No other passage could illustrate in a higher degree the power of modern criticism. Haym is not contented to let the facts speak; he makes them speak, and yet he remains objective. The German biographer has done what Carlyle, in his theory, expected from the biographer:

"That ideal outline of himself, which a man consciously shadows forth in his writings, and which, rightly deciphered, will be truer than any other representation of him, it is the task of the Biographer to fill up into an actual coherent figure."¹⁾

It is now opportune to turn to the Reviews which sprung up at the end of the eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth century.²⁾

All the important literary articles contained in these periodicals are full of fine remarks; and they turned the reader's interest towards the object they criticized by giving selections from the works in question. But no important part has been assigned to biography. The article on Burns in the Edinburgh Review, January 1809, takes into account the *milieu*, for obvious reasons. But as a rule, those critics judged their objects on merely aesthetic grounds, and what is worse, they left too free a scope to the display of personal taste. Their articles

¹⁾ Jean Paul.

²⁾ The Monthly Review, 1749. The Edinburgh Review, 1802. The Quarterly Review, 1809. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1817. The Westminster Review, 1823.

might sometimes use the books noted as what is called a 'peg' to hang the reviewer's own views upon." ¹⁾ This tendency is in direct opposition to scientific criticism. As Carlyle remarks, the critic perches himself resolutely on the shoulder of his author, and therefrom shows as if he commanded him and looked down on him by natural superiority of stature.

The modern critic objects to the cavilling tone, to the knowingness and superiority displayed towards most authors, even in cases where he agrees with the subject-matter of the criticism. ²⁾

Thus, in earlier times, criticism was pursued for its own end. Such was the criticism of Dr. Johnson. Or it was given to the world by the leading poets or reviewers, as explanatory of the principles on which they worked or of special views which they wanted to urge on the reader. Such was the criticism of Milton, Dryden, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the reviewers. ³⁾

This criticism, though one-sided, was at least remarkable and valuable in parts.

But after 1840 most reviews of books were done by men who had not made criticism a special study. That a novel or a poem should be a work of art, framed according to certain artistic rules, seemed to have been forgotten by most authors; and for this the ignorance and leniency of the critics were in no small degree responsible. Even periodicals which might have been expected to consider literary criticism a serious matter, often brought lines without meaning in the place of a sensible judgment. There may here follow an example, by no means one of the worst.

"The volume which first comes to hand ³⁾ is really 'A 1' of the lot. Though this (The Str. R.) is really full of fine thinking, its author must not expect us to accept the very free and independent use he makes of his peculiar stanza. In selecting elsewhere from his volume we are met by the difficulty that some of those poems make appeals more or less (!) strong to our memory — and may possibly (!) be familiar to our readers

¹⁾ Saintsbury.

²⁾ Cf. *Thalaba*, Ed. R., Oct. 1802. *Hours of Idleness*, Ed. R., Jan. 1808.

³⁾ 1849, *The Strayed Reveller* etc.

through some former channel of publication.”¹⁾ — Words. nothing more.

Published at a time when literary criticism had ceased to be a serious affair and an art, Matthew Arnold, with his *Essays in Criticism*,²⁾ at once attained to the standard of a classic.

Matthew Arnold, like Carlyle, was a fervent apostle of the “German ideas”. But as a student of the German language, of German life and thought, Matthew Arnold cannot be compared to Carlyle. As far as can be gathered from his works and letters, he knew just enough German to read a book. Such a standard of knowledge about Germany, though by no means despicable, was, however, not nearly sufficient to make a Pseudo-German out of Arnold. When he went to Berlin in 1885, and again early in 1886, he had forgotten all the little German he ever knew.

“My latest preparation for calling a Droschke, or ordering my luncheon, was reading Ewald on the prophet Zachariah.”³⁾

Whenever Arnold quotes a German sentence or even the title of some book, he makes a grammatical blunder.

“It very much interests me trying to improve myself in speaking German, as I really have a very large vocabulary, which is the great thing. But the usual forms of talk are strange to me, from having known the language from books only.”⁴⁾

At the Royal Theatre in Berlin he saw Schlegel’s translation of *Othello* acted and found it “horrid” — surely because he did not know enough German. But he highly enjoyed *The Wild Cat*, a broad comic piece with songs, at a popular theatre. No doubt, like his father he appreciated the sterling qualities of an educated German. He says of Bunsen: “The way he vitally connected different great branches of knowledge and made them all serve one object is truly German, but German of the best kind.”⁵⁾

But he looked at the Germans more as a society man. — “The troops are splendid . . ., not the least swagger of ferocity”⁶⁾

1) The Athenaeum, Sept. 1849.

2) First Series, 1865.

3) Letter, Nov. 1885.

4) Letter, Nov. 1885.

5) Letter, Nov. 1870.

6) This M. A. wrote nearly twenty years ago.

— on the contrary a generally quiet, humane look; but such men and such discipline! I like the officers too; the Club is full of them, and all in uniform.”¹⁾ He visited princesses and kings and felt very unhappy he could not call on Bismarck.

But the men of science, humph!

“Les professeurs ont dans leur ensemble des hommes très distingués, mais ce sont des savants et des spécialistes, à l’écart du monde proprement dit, lequel reste, je le répète, plus borné, plus sec, et beaucoup moins intéressant que le monde de Londres et de Paris.”²⁾

That he has no more to say than this about the *élite* of the German *savants* seems very strange in an apostle of Culture. Perhaps he was afraid of hitting on a philosopher, and this species of human mortals he dreaded like poison, because, “philosophy has always been bringing me into trouble” — a very candid avowal.³⁾

But all this we can easily understand when we know that all Matthew Arnold’s sympathies were with France. With enthusiasm he speaks of France and Paris. — “Une fois à Paris, le goût m’en reprit comme cela arrive toujours.”⁴⁾

There he did not see statesmen and officers only; he met the most famous men of letters. He was introduced to Villemain, Georges Sand, Renan, Taine, Schérer, and intimately acquainted with Sainte-Beuve.

“Sainte-Beuve gave me an excellent dinner,⁵⁾ and was in full vein of conversation, which, as his conversation is about the best to be heard in France, was charming. After dinner he took me back to his own house, where we had tea; and he showed me a number of letters he had had from G. Sand and Alf. de Musset . . . Sainte-Beuve says I must read *Lui et Elle*.”⁶⁾

Indeed, in Sainte-Beuve’s writings Matthew Arnold found the model for his literary criticism.

1) Letter, Nov. 1885.

2) Letter to Fontanès, Jan. 9, 1886.

3) In *Friendship’s Garland*.

4) Letter to Fontanès, Oct. 5, 1878.

5) A thing to which M. A. never objected.

6) Letter, Aug. 21, 1859.

Although Sainte-Beuve had had his predecessors, yet it was he who put the new theories into a shape comparatively final. As a matter of course, he was an enthusiast for this new method of his. It is obvious that under such circumstances excesses and exaggerations could not be avoided. A clear-minded man like Matthew Arnold, on the contrary, was likely to borrow from his prototype the substantial part only and to avoid excess. Arnold never wrote down a detailed and connected account of his method which obviously was clear before him. Yet it is not difficult to reconstruct his system if we put together, in a logical order, the chance remarks made by him in his various prose-writings.

At first we have to consider a remarkable essay, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time".

Arnold is convinced that of the literature of France and Germany, as of the intellect of Europe in general, the main effort, for many years, has been a critical effort; the endeavours, in all branches of knowledge — theology, philosophy, history and science, to see the object as in itself it really is. — Wordsworth spoke of reviewers not fit for the delicate task of criticism, because they do not approach the object of their criticism with sympathy. — Yet Wordsworth went too far when he said that criticism was, in itself, a baneful and injurious employment. Critical studies are important, because they too deal with ideas, not only the objects of criticism.

All branches of knowledge taken together form a current of ideas, and these ideas reach society. Out of this stir and growth come the creative epochs of literature. In consequence of this, the critic may not place himself outside this current.

Criticism, real criticism, is essentially the exercise of curiosity; if by curiosity we mean the disinterested love of a free play of the mind on all subjects, for its own sake. The chief-characteristic of the new criticism must be disinterestedness. Criticism is "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world". — From this passage we see that Culture, too, was the leading factor in Arnold's theory of literary criticism. — And it is our business to make this *best* known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas; but to do this with inflexible honesty. But that

is all. The new criticism has to leave alone all questions of practical consequences and applications, "else it will merely follow the old rut which it has hitherto followed in this country."

For the English critic of literature it will be advisable to dwell much on foreign thought.

Sometimes, no doubt, for the sake of establishing an author's place in literature, and his relation to a central standard, criticism may have to deal with a subject-matter so familiar that fresh knowledge is out of the question, and then it must be all judgment.

The new criticism will be absolutely impartial. The cavilling and jarring tone of the Reviews will be avoided. — It will be done on general principles as developed by all the great artistic minds of all the civilized countries; it will not lose sight of judgments based on aesthetics which, in the theory and method of Sainte-Beuve, had not obtained the place of importance due to them. And finally, the excess of biography will be avoided. Arnold's essay on Shelley is instructive on this head. It is less a criticism of Shelley than of his biography by Prof. Dowden. In the new criticism, we must reserve a very important place to biography, but only in so far as it explains the work of the author.

What should be a criticism may develop or degenerate into a chapter of social gossip, or a collection of casual anecdotes. What is the good of knowing any detailed scandalous event in the life of Shelley where a few striking facts suffice to give us a clear insight into the state of mind out of which a work sprung?

"Our ideal Shelley was the true Shelley after all; what has been gained by making us at moments doubt it?" — And again in his essay on *Keats*: "The *Letters to Fanny Brawne* make an unpleasing impression. Their publication seems to me inexcusable."

In order to further illustrate the power of modern criticism, let us choose a work of short extent, "*la Poésie des races celtiques*", by E. Renan. In this essay we find an admirable example of utilising, in criticism, the influence of the *race*.

"Quand la critique ne servirait qu'à recueillir ces échos lointains et à rendre une voix aux races qui ne sont plus, ne

serait-ce pas assez pour l'absoudre du reproche qu'on lui adresse trop souvent et sans raison de n'être que négative?"

Never was there a branch of the human family that lived more isolated than the Celts. Hence their powerful individuality. Even at the present time this race does not trust the stranger. — "C'est par excellence une race domestique, formée par la famille et les joies du foyer."

"Aucune famille humaine, je crois, n'a porté dans *l'amour* autant de mystère, nulle autre n'a conçu avec plus de délicatesse, l'idéal de la femme et n'en a été plus dominée."

"L'élément essentiel de la vie poétique du Celte, c'est *l'aventure*, c'est-à-dire la poursuite de l'inconnu, une course sans fin après l'objet toujours fuyant du désir. De là cette croyance à un vengeur futur."

Then Renan goes on tracing the consequences of these characteristics in poetry, insisting on some particular points, e. g. their love of the marvellous and their worship of woman in its ideal purity.

Matthew Arnold has published a book on the same subject entitled: *The Study of Celtic Literature*, which formed the substance of four lectures given by him in the chair of poetry at Oxford. He repeatedly states that he is no Celtic scholar. -- The main interest of the book centres in the application of the theory of the race, which Arnold has pushed very far, and in which proceeding he often loses himself in mere speculation. Nevertheless, the work is highly instructive, being full of most suggestive ideas.

To know the Celtic case thoroughly, one must know the Celtic people; and to know them, one must know that by which a people best express themselves, — their literature.

We want to know what all the mass of documents extant really tells us about the Celt. Those who have dealt with them have gone to work, in general, either as warm Celt-lovers or as warm Celt-haters, and not as disinterested students of an important matter of science.

No doubt, the most distant lands can be shown to have a common property in many marvellous stories. This is one of the most interesting discoveries of modern science; but modern science is equally interested in knowing how the genius

of each people has differentiated, so to speak, this common property of theirs.

Arnold comes to the conclusion that English Poetry got much of its turn for style from a Celtic source; that it got much of its melancholy from a Celtic source as well, and that from a Celtic source it got nearly all its natural magic.

Matthew Arnold always followed the golden rule of the true critic: to approach the object of his investigation with sympathy. — "For it is the critic's first duty, prior even to his duty of stigmatising what is bad, *to welcome everything that is good.*"¹) When setting to work, he may not be balked by any preconceived ideas; he must be open-minded and ready "even to burn what he used to worship, and to worship what he used to burn". — This state of mind is entirely in accordance with the scientific spirit. This principle led Matthew Arnold to demand from the critic that great quality which he calls *urbanity*. — We might call it the *epieikeia* or sweet reasonableness in literary criticism, and it is again a fruit of Culture. — In most of his literary criticism, Arnold is truly admirable for serene calm. At bottom, he was averse to any sort of controversy. In this, he tells us, he tried to follow the example of Buffon: "*Je n'ai jamais répondu à aucune critique . . . Il vaut mieux laisser les mauvaises gens dans l'incertitude.*" Controversy tends to impair dignity and productive force; it checks the free play of the spirit.

"I never have replied, I never will reply to any literary assailant: in such encounters tempers are lost, the world laughs, and truth is not served."²)

In his essay, "The Literary Influence of Academies" Matthew Arnold illustrates by means of examples **what he means by urbanity**. — "You may be provincial by your **matter**, though you may not be provincial by your **style**."

The tone of urbanity is not to be found in most English newspapers.

In *Marcus Aurelius* Arnold gives Mr. Long, the translator of M. Aurelius, a fully deserved lecture on urbanity. Mr. Long

¹ Homer

² Homer

had described the translation of his predecessor as "a most coarse and vulgar copy of the original". A translator should deal leniently with his predecessor.

It may however not be inferred from Arnold's theory that he always avoided controversy. We must clearly distinguish between his literary essays and those he wrote on other subjects. In the first case we admit that he acted after his own theory, except perhaps in the case of Mr. Newman on translating Homer. In other matters he dealt severely with his antagonists. People who had expected nothing but sweetness from the author of *Culture and Anarchy* felt rather surprised to see that this apostle of sweetness could become formidable. It really was a sign of great *naïveté* on the part of Arnold's critics when they expected him peacefully and tacitly to accept all the bad things they said about him.

If Matthew Arnold's contemporaries could not understand his practice of *urbanity*, they had their good reasons for it. Some reviewer was of opinion that a man would much rather be called a fool by Mr. Arnold than be addressed in polished sentences savoured with sarcastic allusions and significant ironical humility. Of course, if Arnold had called any one a fool, one might have called him something worse, and thus would have got the better of him. But it was difficult, yea almost impossible to parry his playful superciliousness. — But how any one can say this tone is worse or at least as bad as *provinciality*, is altogether inconceivable to me. The critic sometimes cannot but say disagreeable truths about a book or an author. But it is one thing to say it in a brutal manner, and it is another to say it gracefully; and the former manner is wholly inconsistent with a good essay in literary criticism which is itself a work of art.

Matthew Arnold had been invited to attend one of the Eisteddfods in Wales. He afterwards expressed his regret that nearly all the old popular lore of song had been crushed out of the English labourers. Listen in what tone the *Times* fell foul of Arnold:

"An Eisteddfod is one of the most mischievous and selfish pieces of sentimentalism which could possibly be perpetrated. It is monstrous folly to encourage the Welsh in a loving

fondness for their old language." Arnold was decried as "a sentimentalist who talked nonsense, and whose dainty taste required something more flimsy than the strong sense and sturdy morality of his Englishmen."

Leaving out of the question a few instances where it is impossible not to discern rancour and egotism — e. g. in the attacks on the bishops and on Colenso — we agree with Frederick W. H. Myers that even the slight affectation or idiosyncrasies of his pellucid style had become so associated with the sense of intellectual enjoyment that few readers wished them away.

The *Essays in Criticism* are no popular writings. First, the attractiveness of biography is wanting in most of them.

This fact seems to contradict the author's theory; but only at first sight. By far the greater number of the *Essays* are about the great poets with whose lives the public were sufficiently acquainted. But when we are introduced to some unknown author, then Matthew Arnold obtains charming effects by means of the framework taken from biography. This is the case with his essays on the Guérins — *petites fleurs effeuillées en pleine éclosion* — and Joubert.

Even in these literary essays the author's want of scientific spirit becomes manifest. He reduces the merits of Byron and appeals to Goethe as an authority for the position to which Byron is reduced. For this purpose, he quotes one single sentence from Goethe: "So bald er reflectiert, ist er ein Kind" — whereas from all the utterances made by Goethe on Byron we learn that by *reflection* the great German thinker meant the maxim-forming faculty.

Moreover, Arnold seldom makes an attempt to treat an author somewhat completely; he only chooses a few important aspects. When he ought to give a comprehensive view of Keats and Gray ¹⁾ he spends his time in inquiring whether Keats was manly, and why Gray was unproductive. —

And that his mania for style led him to many an unfair judgment, will be shown hereafter.

¹⁾ In Ward's English Poets.

And yet these essays are of sterling quality. Manliness, cultivated taste and reverence for art have made their author one of the first-rate English critics. Arnold set up an excellent standard and applied sound principles. With honest determination he stated his own opinion and did not allow himself to be misled by blind admiration:

For our prose, Addison's Attic elegance often gilds moral commonplaces. Jeremy Taylor is a kind of provincial Bossuet. Burke is Asiatic. Jeffrey is superficial, and Macaulay is a rhetorician.

Matthew Arnold showed much tact in not publicly criticising his contemporary poets. But from his letters we learn what he thought of them:

Mrs. Browning he regards as hopelessly confirmed in her aberration from health, nature, beauty, and truth. — *Tennyson* is deficient in intellectual power. In his *Idylls of the King* he does not give the peculiar charm of the Middle Age.¹⁾ His lines on the Prince Consort have no value. In *Ruskin*, the man and character are too febrile, irritable, and weak etc. *Macaulay* is uninteresting, mainly from a dash of intellectual vulgarity which may be found in all his performances. Mr. *Swinburne* is a kind of Pseudo-Shelley. "Swinburne's fatal habit of using a hundred words where one would suffice always offends me."

At first, this sounded strange and supercilious to the English, but only because Matthew Arnold criticised in quarters where it had not hitherto been the custom to criticise.

"Nowadays everybody agrees with him as to Macaulay and Carlyle, whose works are marred by their want of repose, by their obtrusion of eccentricities and personal peculiarities of style."²⁾

Matthew Arnold was probably the first critic that put the poetry of the English hymns to a severe test.

"It is hard to say which of the two, the German hymn-book or ours, has least poetical worth in itself."³⁾

It is about time for any unprejudiced reader, and lover of art, to recognise that all the views of Arnold just given are correct.

¹⁾ M. A. writes Middle Age, not middle ages.

²⁾ Andrew Lang, in *The Cent.*, April 1882.

³⁾ *On Celt. Lit.*

The British and Foreign Evangelical Review, April 1886, attempted to make people believe that Matthew Arnold's style was bad.

"He uses *that* instead of *which*, and *which* instead of *that*. — He uses the pronouns *it* and *its* to such a degree that even the sense is in danger from the habit."

The article in question is a proof, among many, that Arnold's preaching for sweetness and light had not been altogether successful. This is, in fact, the only disapproving remark on Arnold's style that has come to our notice. It is true, many nervous readers objected to his inappropriate use of scriptural phraseology. — "Ye shall die in your sins," he says to those who laugh at the grand style. But Matthew Arnold did not want to hurt anybody's feelings. He maintained that the Bible-verses were models of comprehensive brevity, and also that the Bible was a work of literature, and might be treated as such.

Matthew Arnold is universally regarded as a first-rate stylist. His classical studies and his vast reading,¹⁾ especially his studies in French literature, together with his father's qualities: the sensitive search for simplicity and temperance and clearness of flow, a happy union of dignity and lucidity, — all these factors combined to develop in him that admirable taste for prose-diction which hardly finds its equal.

Matthew Arnold, as a stylist, was a patient worker. In the *Essays in Criticism* he cut out his thought as in marble. But we cannot accept his theory of the style of poetry.

Matthew Arnold explained what he meant by *style*. He justly remarked that the terms used for the various kinds of style cannot be defined. — "The grand style", — but what *is* the grand style? They cry . . . Alas! the grand style is the least matter in the world for verbal definition to deal with adequately. One may say of it as is said of faith: 'One must feel it in order to know what it is.'²⁾

Matthew Arnold gives the explanation by way of examples. The turn for style — for the grand style — is perceptible all

¹⁾ Cf. The Sketch of the Evolution of English prose in *Lives of Johnson*, Preface.

²⁾ On translating Homer.

through English poetry. - "This turn imparts to our poetry a stamp of high distinction, and sometimes it doubles the force of a poet not by nature of the very highest order, such as Gray." ¹⁾)

The most striking instances of the grand style are *Paradise Lost* and the *Divine Comedy*. - "England and Italy here stand alone; Spain, France, and Germany, have produced great poets, but neither Calderon, nor Corneille, nor Schiller, nor even Goethe, has produced a body of poetry in the true grand style . . . But Dante has, and so has Milton." ²⁾)

What is said here about the high style is true and bears evidence of the critic's fine taste for poetry. But he commits one capital error: he confuses high style and style in general. The judgments Matthew Arnold pronounces on the most universally admired English and German poets clearly show that he feels inclined to place very low every work of poetry that is not written in the grand style.

He has a most peculiar method of finding out what grand style is. Namely, he takes line by line separately and asks: "Is this the grand style, or is it not?" In this way he manages not to find any high poetry in Victor Hugo. Let us apply Matthew Arnold's method to his own tragedy, *Merope*.

Merope.

Ah . . . Ah . . . Ah me!

The Chorus.

And I, too, say, ah me!

This is not the grand style! — It is in the interest of fair criticism to reject this method of analysing as artificial. For instance, there are numerous lines in *Paradise Lost* which are not examples of the grand style as long as they are taken isolated. Nevertheless, in the *ensemble* of several verses, the grand style may be evident. One of Milton's finest qualities as Matthew Arnold himself says, is to sink and rise with the subject.

Are there any specimens of the grand style in Matthew Arnold's own poems? Open these little volumes at any page and point out any line, and there you will recognise the style of poetry, but never the grand style. But we need not be sur-

¹⁾ On Celtic Lit.

²⁾ On Celt. Lit.

prised at this, for the artist alone is unable to produce a work in the grand style if at the same time he is not a born poet. And a grand subject might give the style the stamp of grandeur, even if it were rugged. From this point of view we shall be able to see a grand poem in the *Nibelungenlied*, yea even in the ballad of *Chevy Chase*, which hardly count with Matthew Arnold. In his opinion, a style cannot be grand unless it be polished.

By his paradoxical theory Matthew Arnold is led to say that "the principal deficiency of German poetry is in style, that for style, in the highest sense, it shows but little feeling." ¹⁾

But he did not know enough German, nor was he sufficiently acquainted with German literature to be a competent critic in the matter.

It is true that with the English and French style in general is a matter of higher importance than it is with the Germans, which becomes manifest if we read the leading newspapers and parliamentary speeches of the respective countries. But here, our business is with poetry. Indeed, *form* has been an important matter with the German poets since the Silesian Schools of Poetry in the seventeenth century. It must be admitted that only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the fruits of these efforts attained their maturity, but at any rate long before Matthew Arnold made himself known as a poet and critic. His models, the French, push their worship of form to the extreme. This tendency has produced poetry like Théodore de Banville's *Odes funambulesques* and many a poem of the *Parnassiens* where the form is all and the subject nothing. And the present period of decadence in poetry is mainly due to the minute attention bestowed on form.

It is interesting to point out some little practices of a merely exterior character which, however, contribute to render Matthew Arnold's essays particularly attractive. — First of all we may mention his habit of plunging directly into the subject by a catching introductory sentence, mostly some quotation from the author who is to be discussed.

"Some fifteen years ago I was fascinated by a French sentence: Les dieux jaloux ont enfoui quelque part les témoignages

¹⁾ On Celt. Lit.

de la descendance des choses; mais au bord de quel Océan ont-ils roulé la pierre qui les couvre, ô Macarée!"¹⁾

Moreover, Matthew Arnold adopted an excellent practice of the old English Reviews, namely to give select passages. His admirable literary taste rendered him particularly fit for this task. His selections always cast a stream of light on the points he wishes to set before the reader's eyes.²⁾

The introduction into England of the new French method of literary criticism; a wise moderation in applying the new principles; a most exquisite literary taste and a serene urbanity; finally, clearness, candour, beauty of sentiment of style — these are the immortal merits of Matthew Arnold as a literary critic.

"The fact undoubtedly is, that though there are greater living poets than Mr. Arnold, and though there may even be here and there a prose writer of equal merit, there is certainly no man of like mark in either of these departments of letters who can bear comparison with him in the other."³⁾

Now, the question may be raised whether versatility places a man above another who excels in one branch only. I do not hesitate to say that it is exactly versatility which places Matthew Arnold above many of his famous contemporaries. His poetry secures him a respectable position among the nineteenth century poets. His criticisms of life and religion do not add to his literary fame. They are pamphlets which will possibly be forgotten when our present generation has passed away. It matters little;

"For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain!"

As a literary critic, in point of general taste and artistic attitude, he can hardly be surpassed.

In each separate branch, Matthew Arnold is, at least, remarkable. In his totality, he is truly great and admirable, and this for one principal reason:

Matthew Arnold is an idealist of the very best sort.

¹⁾ Maurice de Guérin.

²⁾ Cf. Essays on Amiel, Heine, Marcus Aurelius, Maurice and Eugénie de Guérin.

³⁾ Macmillan's Mag., Dec. 1883.

Towards the end of his career, he felt that he had been too sanguine in his hopes.

"I more and more learn the extreme slowness of things, and that though we are all disposed to think that everything will change in our life-time, it will not."

Yet he never ceased to hope.

"Still, the change, for being slower than we expected, is not the less sure." ¹⁾

~~Arnold's ideal was Culture.~~ The idea of Culture is the key-note of all his social and religious essays no less than of his literary criticism. And — *le style est l'homme même*. — Arnold's whole personality is an embodiment of Culture, and as such he appears above all in his Poetry and Essays in Criticism.

And his Puritan tendency he utilised for honest work towards the realisation of his cherished ideal, at a time when materialism was still triumphant. Whether we agree with him on all points, what does it matter? It is the privilege of the cultured mind to admire even where it cannot agree.

Culture will grow; it must and will become more universal as time goes on; and Culture must and will unite mankind more and more. And we dare not treat as a *fata morgana* that future time when the earth shall witness

One common wave of thought and joy
Lifting mankind again.

As an idealist, Matthew Arnold has been a prophet whose fame is destined to increase rather than to diminish,

Not only mortal greatness, that has perished •
For ever from thy vision far away;
Yet left behind a grandeur that is cherished
By those it led towards a nobler day. ²⁾

¹⁾ Letter to Grant Duff. Esq., Aug. 1877.

²⁾ David R. Williamson.

The End.

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